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Generational approach to the social patterns of relation to work

Changing social patterns of relation to work

Workpackage 3: Qualitative approach through biographies and group interviews

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Project no. 028408 (CIT5)

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Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	13
The report	13
The authors.....	13
 CHAPTER 1:	
SYNTHESIS OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL REPORTS	15
1. MAIN METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL ASPECTS GUIDING THE APPROACH TO THE INTERVIEWS.....	15
1.1 <i>Guiding principles for the selection of respondents.....</i>	15
1.2 <i>Type and duration of interviews.....</i>	15
1.3 <i>Aims and modes of analysis; main theoretical guiding concepts.....</i>	16
1.4 <i>Procedures for the analysis of the textual material</i>	17
2. MAIN RESULTS	19
2.1 <i>Main organising dimensions of the patterns of relations to work</i>	19
2.1.1 Expressive and instrumental relations to work	19
2.1.2 Types of life courses	20
2.1.3 Emergent findings	21
2.2 <i>Results – patterns of relation to work and structural variables.....</i>	26
2.2.1 Gender	26
2.2.2 Age	27
2.2.3 Educational qualifications	28
3. INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS	28
3.1 <i>Introduction.....</i>	28
3.2 <i>Main concepts of analysis</i>	28
3.3 <i>Denial of the importance of age.....</i>	29
3.4 <i>Cooperative intergenerational relations.....</i>	29
3.5 <i>Potential sources and dimensions of intergenerational tensions.....</i>	30
3.5.1 Instability, precariousness and insecurity versus stability in work positions and in social security benefits.....	30
3.5.2 Accumulated experience versus formal knowledge.....	31
3.5.3 Innovation versus experience	32
3.5.4 Mutual stereotypes regarding age groups.....	33
3.5.5 Competition within same age group.....	34
4. CONCLUDING REMARKS	34
4.1 <i>Regarding patterns of relation to work.....</i>	34
4.2 <i>Regarding intergenerational relations.....</i>	35
4. REFERENCES	37

CHAPTER 2:	
REPORT FROM BELGIUM.....	39
<i>Introduction.....</i>	39
1. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS	39
1.1 <i>Narrative interviews.....</i>	39
1.1.1 Selection of the informants and interviews overview	39
1.1.2 Methodological design	41
1.1.3 Method for content analysis	42
1.2 <i>Group discussions</i>	43
1.2.1 Selection of the informants and groups overview	43
1.2.2 Methodological design	44
1.2.3 Method for content analysis	44
2. PATTERNS OF RELATION TO WORK: ANALYSES OF TYPES	45
2.1 <i>Definition of the typology.....</i>	45
2.1.1 The type as a category for analysis	45
2.1.3 Standardised life courses, individualised life courses.....	46
2.1.4 Pragmatic attitude, reflexive attitude	47
2.2 <i>Overview of the individual profiles and the typology</i>	47
2.3 <i>Relation to work and relation to employment</i>	52
3. CHARACTERISATION OF FOUR TYPES OF RELATION TO WORK	52
3.1 <i>Main trends of the four types.....</i>	53
3.2 <i>Work: a constraint to experiment positively</i>	55
3.2.1 Short summaries of representative interviews	55
3.2.2 Core elements of the type.....	56
3.2.3 Relation to others and society	57
3.3 <i>Work: a means to earn money.....</i>	58
3.3.1 Short summaries of representative interviews	58
3.3.2 Core elements of the type.....	58
3.3.3 Relation to others and society	59
3.4 <i>Work: a support for self-development.....</i>	60
3.4.1 Short summaries of representative interviews	60
3.4.2 Core elements of the type.....	62
3.4.3 Relation to others and society	63
3.5 <i>Work: a cornerstone in the identity.....</i>	64
3.5.1 Short summaries of representative interviews	64
3.5.2 Core elements of the type.....	65
3.5.3 Relation to others and society	66
4. INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS	67
4.1 <i>What means generations at work for all age groups?</i>	67
4.1.1 Attitudes regarding work and employment.....	69
4.1.2 ICT as figurehead of modernisation.....	71
4.1.3 The mark of trajectories	72
4.1.4 The importance of human relations.....	75
4.1.5 Knowledge and ways of working.....	76
4.2 <i>Visions of generations at work and types of relation to work.....</i>	78
4.2.1 Main issues raised in each type of relation to work	78
4.2.2 Relation to work and/or relation to employment	79
4.2.3 Age groups are not homogenous.....	80

4.2.4	Main gender differentiations	82
5.	INTERMEDIATE CONCLUSIONS	83
7.	REFERENCES	86

CHAPTER 3: REPORT FROM FRANCE

1.	METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS	89
1.1	<i>Individual interviews</i>	89
1.1.1	Respondent selection and interview implementation.....	89
1.1.2	Analysis method.....	90
1.1.3	Respondents' social and professional characteristics.....	91
1.2	<i>Group interviews</i>	93
1.2.1	Respondent selection and interview implementation.....	93
1.2.2	Analysis method.....	94
1.2.3	Respondents' social and professional characteristics.....	95
2.	WORK RELATIONSHIPS MODELS: AN ESSAY IN TYPOLOGY	96
2.1	<i>First "type": intensive professional investment</i>	96
2.1.1	Respondents' social and professional characteristics.....	96
2.1.2	Clarification of the 'type' and its 'sub-categories'.....	97
2.1.3	Interviews symbolic of the "type".....	99
2.2	<i>Second "type": balance in social time</i>	101
2.2.1	Respondents' social and professional characteristics.....	101
2.2.2	Clarification of the "type" and its "sub-categories".....	101
2.2.3	Interviews symbolic of the "type".....	105
2.3	<i>Third "type": limited professional investment</i>	106
2.3.1	Respondents' social and professional characteristics.....	106
2.3.2	Clarification of the "type" and "sub-categories".....	106
2.3.3	Interviews symbolic of the "type".....	109
3.	CONSIDERATIONS ON INTER-GENERATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE WORK SPACE.....	111
3.1	<i>Cooperative relations</i>	112
3.1.1	Increasing professionalism and induction of young recruits.....	112
3.1.2	A benevolent and comprehensive posture.....	114
3.1.3	Training beginners: a gratifying task for employees with experience	116
3.1.4	From transmission to co-apprenticeships.....	117
3.1.5	A social framework which favours cooperative dynamics	118
3.2	<i>Distant relationships</i>	120
3.2.1	Effect of age	121
3.2.2	Uniformity of groups.....	121
3.2.3	Intensification of work	122
3.2.4	Generation effect and differentiated relations in the workplace	123
3.3	<i>Conflictual relations</i>	125
3.3.1	A lack of recognition that produces inter-generation tension	125
3.3.2	"Social disdain" of young people.....	125
3.3.3	Disqualification of older employers.....	128
3.4	<i>Inter-generation relations – multiple relational configurations resulting from a conjunction of causalities</i>	132
4.	CONCLUSION: GENERATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE – AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE	134

4.1	<i>Analysis of “relations in the workplace” from the dynamic viewpoint</i>	134
4.2	<i>Young people – a common basis of variable individual aspirations and resources and strategies to satisfy them</i>	136
4.3	<i>Inter-generation relations in the workplace – a place for cooperation and transmission to be consolidated</i>	138
5.	REFERENCES	140

CHAPTER 4:

REPORT FROM GERMANY

1.	GENERAL VIEW ON THE INTERVIEWS – RECONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL PATTERNS OF WORK	143
1.1	<i>The sample</i>	143
1.2	<i>Methodological Considerations</i>	145
1.2.1	The narrative interview	145
1.2.2	Collective hermeneutics as explanation method	145
1.2.3	On the combination of collective hermeneutics and qualitative content analysis	147
1.3	<i>Work orientations as structures of signification</i>	148
1.4	<i>Seven patterns of interpretation of the relationship to work</i>	151
1.4.1	Work as a means of securing a livelihood.....	151
1.4.2	Work as learning and as career	155
1.4.3	The social pattern of interpretation of the “optimiser”	157
1.4.4	Work as vocation and as self-fulfilment	159
1.4.5	Work as social integration.....	162
1.4.6	Work as social convention	166
1.4.7	Work as an equi-poised part in a balance of work and life.....	168
2.	A GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: PROFILES OF WORK AND LIFE SITUATIONS	169
2.1	<i>Methodical Considerations</i>	169
2.2	<i>Theoretical Framework</i>	169
2.3	<i>Profiles of the young generation</i>	173
2.4	<i>Profiles of the middle-aged generation</i>	178
2.5	<i>Profiles of the older generation</i>	182
2.6	<i>Work orientations and generational relations</i>	187
3.	GENERATIONS IN DISCOURSE.....	188
3.1	<i>Methodological considerations</i>	188
3.2	<i>Topics and characteristics of intergenerational discourse</i>	190
3.3	<i>Topics and arguments, consensus and controversies</i>	192
4.	CONCLUSIONS	193
4.1	<i>General view on work orientations</i>	193
4.2	<i>Targeted view on generations and work orientations</i>	193
4.3	<i>Generations in discourse</i>	194
5.	REFERENCES	194

CHAPTER 5: REPORT FROM HUNGARY 197

1. NARRATIVE LIFE-STORY INTERVIEWS IN OUR CONTEXT	197
1.1 <i>The interview technique in theory</i>	197
1.1.1 Work and identity – The interpretation of the research topic in relation to the interview technique	197
1.1.2 The method itself – The way of conducting a narrative biographic interview	197
1.1.3 The uses of the method – Possibility to grasp narrative identity and healing effect	198
1.1.4 Interpretation – Hermeneutic case reconstruction in theory	198
1.1.5 Interpretation – Hermeneutic case reconstruction in practice	199
1.2 <i>The interview in practice</i>	200
1.2.1 Work and identity – Translation of the research topic into an initial question of the interview	200
1.2.2 The sample	201
2. RESULTS GAINED FROM INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS	204
2.1 <i>Type 1: Work as a source of fulfilment</i>	205
2.1.1 Type 1a: Career broken by communism	205
2.1.2 Type 1b: Career broken by transition	211
2.1.3 Type 1c: Work as an area of community and solidarity	215
2.1.4 Type 1d: Work as a domain of development and self-fulfilment	217
2.2 <i>Type 2: Work as an obligation</i>	224
2.3 <i>Type 3: Work as a source of money</i>	227
2.3.1 Type 3a: Hobby as a source of fulfilment	228
2.3.2 Type 3b: Cannot “think out of the box”	229
2.4 <i>Conclusion from individual interviews</i>	230
3. GROUP INTERVIEWS IN OUR CONTEXT	232
3.1 <i>The interview technique</i>	232
3.1.1 Compromise between group interviews and focus groups	232
3.1.2 Main themes and questions	232
3.1.3 Group constellation	232
3.2 <i>Group interview results</i>	235
3.2.1 Exercise 1: ‘imagined worlds’	235
3.2.2 Exercise 2: montage	236
3.2.3 Exercise 3: discussing quotations from narrative interviews	246
3.2.4 Exercise 4: list of traits	247
4. INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION	249
5. REFERENCES	250

CHAPTER 6: REPORT FROM ITALY 253

1. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS	253
1.1 <i>Narrative interviews</i>	253
1.1.1 Selection of the informers and interviews overview	253
1.1.2 Methodological design	255
1.1.3 Method for the analysis	257

1.2	<i>Focus group</i>	259
1.2.1	Methodological design	259
1.2.2	Selection criteria of the participants.....	261
2.	GENERATIONS AND WORK: RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS	263
2.1	<i>Transversal analysis and general remarks from narratives and focus groups</i> ..	263
2.1.1	Family background.....	263
2.1.2	Centrality of the relational element in the workplace	264
2.1.3	Money.....	264
2.1.4	Ethics and work.....	266
2.1.5	Instability.....	266
2.1.6	Relation between old and young at work.....	267
2.1.7	Relation between work and other spheres of life	268
2.1.8	Relation to work.....	269
2.1.9	The gender dimension	270
2.2	<i>Emerging themes</i>	271
2.2.1	List of the themes	271
2.2.2	Description of the themes.....	272
2.3	<i>Analysis of work between generations</i>	273
3.	CONCLUDING REMARKS	275
4.	SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT NARRATIVES.....	277
5.	REFERENCES	283
	<i>Research reports, reviews, working papers, newsletters and conferences</i>	284

CHAPTER 7:

REPORT FROM PORTUGAL 285

1.	METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS	285
1.1	<i>Narrative interviews</i>	285
1.1.1	Selection of the informants and overview of the interviews.....	285
1.1.3	Method for the analysis	287
1.2	<i>Group discussions</i>	289
1.2.1	Selection of the informers and groups overview.....	289
1.2.2	Methodological design	289
2.	PATTERNS OF RELATION TO WORK: ANALYSES OF TYPES	289
2.1	<i>Introduction</i>	289
2.2	<i>Overview of the individual profiles and first presentation of the typology</i>	291
2.3	<i>Typology and individual profiles</i>	293
2.3.1	Type 1: I have career plans for the sector where I work.....	293
2.3.2	Type 2: My job is not my career	303
2.3.3	Type 3: I like what I do and personal relationships are central to it	309
2.3.4	Type 4: Working for a cause	312
2.4	<i>Top-down analyses</i>	314
2.5	<i>Combining top-down with bottom-up analyses</i>	315
2.6	<i>Combining Bottom-up, Top-down analyses and salient patterns of relation to work</i>	317
2.7	<i>Articulation of types, narrative structures and work-family, work-career relations</i>	319
2.8	<i>Discussion</i>	320

3. INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS	322
3.1 <i>Denying the importance of age</i>	322
3.2 <i>Innovation versus experience</i>	324
3.3 <i>Competition within “the same age group”</i>	325
3.4 <i>Stories of conflicts</i>	326
3.5 <i>Reducing conflicts</i>	327
4. CONCLUSIONS	328
4.1 <i>General overview and discussion of salient features</i>	328
4.2 <i>Salient features - Mutable work orientations and challenges for the future</i>	329
Point 1 – <i>self and work</i>	329
Point 2 – <i>negotiating different models of relation to work and management</i>	330
Point 3 – <i>outcomes of the new models of work and working person</i>	330
Point 4 – <i>“extreme cases” - only careers, not work?</i>	330
5. REFERENCES	331

Introduction

The SPReW project focuses on the factors leading to solidarity or tensions in intergenerational relations, in the area of work. Recent researches raised the hypothesis that the younger generation has different attitudes, forms of participation, expectations and engagement in work than the older generations. The pessimistic view concludes to an increased individualism, but this assumption is not founded on robust research. The project will provide a better understanding of the evolving relation that generations have to work. Such changes have important consequences on intergenerational relations at the workplace, on solidarity between generations, and on the relevance of specific work and employment policies as well as on other public policies.

The relation to work can be analysed through different angles: value given to work, expectations associated to work, vision of the future, relation to precariousness or mobility, more generally the construction of an identity through work and the linking with other key values. A link is also established between the relation to work and other correlated issues: family formation and lifestyles, intergenerational relations in society, social inclusion or exclusion. The gender dimension and the position of migrants are constitutive and transversal aspects of all research tasks. The project also analyses age policies related to work and employment and identifies good practices. The research methodology combines qualitative, quantitative, comparative and participatory approaches.

The key objectives are to draw out social patterns of relation to work for different generations, including the gender dimension; to study articulations with other societal fields (family formation and lifestyles, intergenerational relations, social cohesion); to develop awareness of public authorities and social actors on the generational dimensions in the relation to work and employment; to draw out guidelines for youth policies and ageing policies in this area.

The report

This report is the third deliverable of the SPReW project. It gathers the analyses that have been conducted in each country in a common qualitative approach, consisting in a total of 163 narrative interviews and 18 group interviews. A common methodological design supports this large empirical approach. A first chapter proposes a synthesis overview of all the reports. The report provides a renewed perspective on what is the meaning of work for different generations.

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Chapter 1: Synthesis overview of the national reports

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1. Main methodological and theoretical aspects guiding the approach to the interviews

1.1 Guiding principles for the selection of respondents

In the six countries included in this report, the respondents to the individual interviews were selected in order to maximise variance regarding personal variables, such as sex, age, qualifications, and parental status. Additional societal criteria were also used in order to adjust the sample and maximise its variability: type of management and structure, occupation and sector (public versus private) were the more relevant. However, in Hungary, France, and Belgium, importance was also accorded to other factors, a fact which diminished the variance of these samples by increasing their level of profundity: in Hungary, the selection was oriented to three sectors of the labour market which were differently influenced by the transition to capitalist economy and there was also an attempt to select members of different generations within same families, for achieving a longitudinal perspective, but this attempt succeeded in only a small proportion. In France, the group interviews were taken as opportunities for joining together employees from the same company and in some cases from the same departments, for an in-depth analysis of trans-generational relations. In Belgium, the analyses were concentrated in five sectors, differentiated by activity, management and structure.

The distribution of the interviews according to sex, educational level and age is shown in the following table.

Table of distribution of 163 interviews by sex, educational level and age

	Men	Women	Total	Low	Mid	High	Total
< 30	23	31	54	6	26	22	54
30 - 50	34	28	62	10	23	29	62
> 50	27	20	47	13	16	18	47
Total	84	79	163	29	65	69	163

1.2 Type and duration of interviews

A comparison across the six countries shows that Hungary, Germany and Portugal took a narrative approach to the interviews, with a biographic orientation aiming at drawing out life

stories. Belgium, Italy and France chose to do semi-structured and comprehensive interviews, also with a biographic orientation. The interviews were all long, with a duration that ranged from 45m to 3 hours. So, each of the 163 interviews performed meant that a long and detailed conversation with the interviewee took place, approaching the themes of work, intergenerational relations and biographic trajectories. Some national reports (Hungary, Germany, Italy) highlight the positive impact that these long narrative conversations about the Self may have on the interviewee, and how in some cases they may even have healing effects.

All the interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of respondents and integrally transcribed. Therefore the material produced for analysis is rather extended.

1.3 Aims and modes of analysis; main theoretical guiding concepts

The approaches of the six partners involved in this work-package converge regarding the core assumptions from which to depart for examining patterns of relation to work. First of all, all the reports depart from the notion that in our times it is not possible to explore the meaning of work without the notion of *Identity*. As the Hungarian team has remarked, “relation to work is part of our selfhood”, and it is impossible to understand one without the other.

Within this first point of convergence, it is however possible to give different focuses to the analyses. These can be more focused on the psychological aspects and determinants of the patterns of relation to work, searching for and privileging individualised points of entry into the relation each person maintains with work, and departing from individual level variables. Or, on the other hand, the analyses can be more attentive to the sociological or structural dimensions of the relation to work, concentrating more on the conditions that enable or constrain different types of relation to work.

Nevertheless, some convergence between these two types of approach is always present, because the materials with which we construct our individual identities and ourselves are socially made available, are valued or devalued according to socially shared – although constantly contested – criteria, and differ according to context and culture (Rose, 1996). In this way, exploring identity as a core concept for understanding the relations to work implies looking at individual appropriations of socially produced and shared symbolic resources, which form the symbolic environment with which each person understands herself and the others.

Within these specifications, it seems possible to say that all the teams combined individual with social dimensions in their approaches. However, the work of the Hungarian, German and Italian teams affords a more clear importance to individual dimensions as entry points for the analyses, while the French, Portuguese and Belgian teams are more insistently focused on the capacity of social conditions and social factors for shaping individual interpretations of the lived experience. For instance, the Italian team states, “we focus on the individual level (...), but our interest is to find a balance between the particular (the subject’s point of view) and some general logic of action, resorting to an ethnosociological approach to situational categories”. And both the German and the Hungarian teams work is informed by Psychoanalytic concepts, albeit combined with other theorisations of the Self more socially oriented, and proposes to examine conscious and unconscious structures and aspects of identity and their role. In turn, the Belgian team proposes as a main goal of their work “to identify the transversal role of pregnant social factors”.

Another important point of convergence in the approaches of the different teams regards the importance accorded to narrative. If the notion of *Identity* is central for all the reports, the idea that identity is constructed in narrative form and through narrative efforts (Bruner, 1987) is also a structuring element of the reports. Reconstruction of life-stories (Hungary), looking at interaction between objective and subjective elements in this reconstruction (Italy), recovering the narrative structure of the professional and educational trajectories of the persons (Gergen & Gergen, 1984) (Portugal) are goals that permeate the work of the various teams.

There are also convergences in what concerns the conceptualisation of communication, language and discourse as multi-layered and multi-functional phenomena. This is an important point, because this is a work-package based on interviews, most of them narrative. And when a method which yields discursive material is employed, a conceptualisation of what discourse is, what it accomplishes and how to approach it is a necessity.

In these reports, discourse is then seen as oriented to interaction and communication goals, and not just as a way of simply and un-problematically referring to the world and to what the world is. Language and discourse are seen as fulfilling various functions, some of them pragmatic and fulfilling self-presentational goals. This implies that the analyses need to reconstruct structures of signification with both surface and latent dimensions (Germany, Belgium, Hungary), in order to make explicit what was tacit knowledge (Germany), and to look at both at the intention within the discourse and at non-intentional discourse (Belgium). It also implies that the analyses need to attempt to grasp simultaneously the content and the inter-personal and societal functions of discourse (Portugal), as well as the way it is oriented to the relation happening in the interview. Sometimes this multi-layered nature of discourse was dealt with by a comparison between the story told and the story lived and corroborative fine analysis of text-segments (Hungary). The multi-functional nature of language is clearly stated in the Belgian, Portuguese, German and Hungarian reports, remaining more implicit in the French and Italian ones.

1.4 Procedures for the analysis of the textual material

When our research goals are to focus and understand underlying structures of meaning, the hermeneutic approach should be privileged (Flick, 2002). The hermeneutic stance is general to all of the reports, in the sense that the focus of the work developed is always predominantly ideographic, concentrating on comprehension and on thick description (Geertz, 1973), not on explaining, controlling and predicting. In other words, the nomotetic orientation is less privileged in all the reports than the ideographic one.

Some teams also resorted to the collective hermeneutics approach – Belgium, Germany and Hungary – by which personal and social structures of signification are analysed through social patterns of interpretation. Collective hermeneutics relies on the interaction between researchers as a research instrument, and since it is very time consuming, it was used by these three teams for analysing only a portion of the interviews.

Some teams relied also on the elaboration of transversal conceptual categories, using content analysis as a form of approaching their material, either software aided (Belgium - NVivo) or classical (Italy, Portugal). A point of converge regards thematic analyses: these were used by all the teams in order to find the main or dominating themes of each interview regarding the individual relation to work life stories. These themes are expressed throughout the reports in

identification labels for the interviews, such as: “Work as a means to earn money” (FTU); “My job is not my career” (CIS); “Work as a source of money (MTA PTI); Work as a means of securing a livelihood (IAW); “work as a secondary component of the identity” (CEE); work as social integration (IAW); I like what I do and personal relationships are central (CIS); work as a meaningful activity (MTA PTI).

Finally, the goal of identifying in the interview material a number of central organising dimensions, enabling the researchers to access recurrent or repetitive patterns of relation to work was an extremely important part of the work in this work package.

For some teams this meant organising broad typologies based on pre-defined concepts, which resulted from previous analysis of the literature and were used as guiding notions for approaching the empirical material. Of these, the distinction between a *Pragmatic, or instrumental*, attitude towards work and a *Subjective or Expressive* one was very central. A *subjective* or *expressive* relation to work is defined as one that implies that work is a major source of identity and people are engaged in a search for meaning where the workplace plays a relevant role and self-development and meaningful functions are central. On the other hand, engaging in an *instrumental* or *pragmatic* involvement with work means that the person considers work as essentially important for providing material security, and issues of revenue dominate patterns of relations to work.

This organising dichotomy is present in an explicit form in the Belgian report, and also in the Portuguese and German ones.

For other teams, the research strategy was instead more oriented for the search of emergent categories. This was the option of France, Italy and Hungary, and these teams ended up arriving at the emergent notion of “centrality of work” as a main organiser of their material. The French team examines the centrality of work by looking at how it is expressed in time consumed at work and centrality for identity construction. For Hungary the organising axe was “work -between a source of joy and identity and a nuisance”, and Italy prefers to use the notion of the “meaningfulness of work” for a person’s life.

On the whole, of course, the emergent notion of the “centrality of work in a persons’ life and regarding identity construction” is not independent or un-related to the pre-defined opposition between a Reflexive *versus* a Pragmatic orientation to work. This is so, because a *Reflexive* attitude to work is explicitly defined as one in which “work plays an essential role in the identity”. In this sense, although some teams examined the reflexive relation to work (Belgium, Portugal, Germany), and the others (France, Hungary, Italy) organised their analysis around the notion of “centrality of work for identity”, the dimension “*impact of work upon identity construction and development*” can be said to be the main organiser of the approaches of all the teams. The differences between them were more linked to the strategy of either choosing to analyse the centrality of work for identity construction through pre-defined categories – like the expressive/pragmatic ones – or opting for relying more on emergent categories, grounded in the data.

Finally, another pre-determined concept used by the Belgian and German teams was the notion of *Life course* – standardized *versus* individualized. The Portuguese team used a similar notion: narrative structure as cyclic, progressive or regressive.

2. Main results

2.1 Main organising dimensions of the patterns of relations to work

2.1.1 Expressive and instrumental relations to work

From the section above, it can be deduced that the main results of the analysis of the pattern of relations to work regard the demonstration of the predominance of a type of relation which makes work a central organiser of identity, time and self-development.

This corroborates the proposals and results of the research framed by the notion of post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1977; 1995). This research departs from an analysis of the current affluent societies that emerged after the Second World War, and shows how, in these societies, there is a high importance accorded to goals such as self-expression, self-development, or a meaningful life. This importance takes centre stage by over-passing materialist goals, such as security and order. In the domain of labour, this seems to be expressed in the high importance accorded to work as an opportunity for self-expression and self-development.

The importance and latitude of the *Reflexive involvement* with work is made explicitly in the Belgian, Portuguese and German cases. The three reports converge in suggesting the predominance of expressive orientations to work, although with an important degree of diversity among them. This diversity is an important point, and has led the German report to conclude that “the thesis of a double relationship to work (Pragmatic versus Expressive) remains valid, although the expressive relationship has undergone important changes” (...) the main thrust of which “is that of differentiation”. In other words, within the expressive type of relation to work there seem to be now more sub-types. This in turn may signal that the fragmentation of the category may be a way of adapting to a changing world, since the fragmentation and multiplication of meaning categories often serves that adaptive function (Castro & Wagner, in press). Finally, in this regard it is also important to say that the struggle to achieve a balance between the two orientations seems also to be recognised by most of the reports as an important organiser of the relation to work.

The French, Hungarian and Italian reports do not resort to the same concept, but show nevertheless convergent results to some extent, by highlighting the centrality of work for so many of their interviewees, their desire to develop through work and the importance of work for identity construction. For instance, the importance of having meaningful jobs is clearly present in young cases in Italy, even if this meaningfulness is not directly determined by the content of the job. The French report suggests that post-materialistic expectations (which are close to expressive/reflexive orientations) are more and more pregnant among the younger, and writes: “we managed to identify a common basis of expectations and behaviour patterns among the young respondents: (...) attachment to work environment as a vector of the construction of identity and of social integration; strong desire for fulfilment at work; (...) valued placed on the interest and meaning of work, opportunities for learning, and room allowed for initiative”.

On the whole, the synthesis this far presented allows us to conclude that the importance of work for identity development is found throughout the reports as a very important organiser of the relation of individuals to work in our time. It is prevalent in many cases, and it is

expressed by such indicators as: willingness to learn more and to invest time and effort in more knowledge, the framing of work as vocation, or cause, the framing of work as a central dimension for self-development, or the tying up of private and working lives.

Let us turn the attention now to the other side of this dichotomy, which is the *Pragmatic* involvement with work. It was found that expressiveness might be replaced by instrumentality of routine, after the first years (Germany), and that often de-investment (less centrality of work) results from an experienced and perceived gap between high expectations and reality of work (France). Sometimes it is observed that an Instrumental or Pragmatic relation to work replaces a previously expressive one, when it is a source of stability (Italy, Portugal).

The Italian report suggests that the instrumental\expressive distinction as descriptive of the relation to work may not be very informative or heuristic for their context. The report observes that: "people may look for self-actualisation in work and in other spheres of life at the same time, as do people who speak of passion when referring to work, or those who invest in and cultivate other interests outside work" (p. 271). The report further remarks that a good example of this is the fact that some instrumental elements, like money, also play a symbolic role: "money is a measure of one's worth, an objective sign of recognition and esteem, a symbol of emancipation."

This calls attention to the fact that all typologies are imperfect regarding their correspondence with reality, but they may be nevertheless useful ways for approaching complex issues, by helping making sense and identifying a number of central dimensions.

2.1.2 Types of life courses

It was also very clear from the whole of the analyses that other dimensions were found to co-occur with the expressive/instrumental dichotomy and were capable of altering and qualifying it.

From these co-occurring and co-constructive dimensions, an important one regards what can be called *standardised versus individualised life courses* (Belgium, Hungary), or *Institutionalised versus discontinuous life courses* (Germany), or *linear versus cyclic trajectories* (Portugal). The second term of this dichotomy refers to singular, less normative educational and employment paths and agendas, where the specificity of certain individual choices or life events does not follow the average rule, which sometimes means that ruptures were suffered, and sudden and radical alterations took place in the individuals' lives.

The impact of this dimension is not, of course, linear. A comparison across the national reports of the six countries shows convergent but also distinct patterns.

In the case of Belgium, results show that trajectories are a key point shaping relations to work in articulation with the type of involvement in work (Pragmatic or Reflexive). These two dimensions together shape different patterns of relation to work. In Germany, instrumental work orientations are present only with some interviewees who have a discontinuity in their professional or familiar life courses. In the case of Portugal, and similarly, cyclic courses associate with instability, dissatisfaction with work or organisational conditions and often with a Pragmatic involvement with work; in turn, linear trajectories in work are related to first job situations and lack of changes in professional life; and progressive trajectories seem to relate more to orientations for career development and expressive motives.

Although the French report informs about types of life courses it does not use this notion as an explicit analytical category, like the previous countries. The report reaches the conclusion that the type of trajectory seems to have a high influence on the patterns of relation to work, but this result emerges from a comprehensive analysis of the trajectories which mark the models of work relationships, and does not result from an a priori, theory guided expectation. The French report hence indicates that the type of trajectory is highly related to the level of professional involvement.

Sometimes this dimension seems to impact upon the relation to work by changing its intensity, not its direction: individualised life courses, or trajectories presenting discontinuities, seem to be often associated with a stronger accentuation of the types of relation to work that were already favoured. This means that the reflexive involvement to work may be accentuated, as is expressed in the type of relation which regards “*work as a cornerstone of identity*”, identified in the Belgian report, and in a case from the Portuguese report, which Theme is “*Trying again, now with a degree - trying to still “make it” after a difficult start*”. Or it may mean an also stronger accentuation of the pragmatic approach to work, as expressed in the notion of “*work as a means to earn money*”, also from the Belgian report. In the German report, the ruptures in the life-course seem to accentuate also another dimension: a type of relation to work that seeks mostly social integration. In the Portuguese report, the pragmatic /instrumental orientations are more likely to be present when discontinuity in professional or family life exists or existed, a situation which may gain strength due to economic responsibilities (Germany).

A different type of discontinuity than the ones presented, but also very influential regarding patterns of relation to work, emerges in the Hungarian interviews. While the discontinuities analysed in Belgium, Portugal or Germany, although framed by societal conditions, are closely linked with individual events and options, the Hungarian case presents a major properly societal discontinuity: the change from a socialist to a capitalist organisation of work and society. In the Hungarian context, the type of life course doesn't seem to be a deciding element for the definition of work orientation. This seems to be due to the fact that the moment of the person's working life in which socialisation and historical transition occurred has more importance and becomes a more central element. The numerous impacts of this transition permeate the whole of the interviews. Two can be stressed as central. The first concerns the fact that difficulties are perceived to be changing the values, which were considered appropriate for the work context– like solidarity – substituting them by other more individualised ones. The Hungarian report hence remarks that: “some nostalgia is felt for the times preceding the regime change when work life was more familial with more solidarity felt”; or: “Interviewees talked of a more intense community life, higher level solidarity between workers, a feeling of togetherness in the socialist organisation of work”. A second major impact of this transition regards the role of women, a topic we shall approach further on.

2.1.3 Emergent findings

Besides developing typologies and analysis based on dimensions identified in the literature as fundamental, like the Expressive-Pragmatic dichotomy above analysed, there were also important emergent findings which were not entirely and explicitly anticipated before the analyses started. Of these emergent findings, three seem to be rather central, and will be approached in the next sections.

Polycentric conception of existence

A polycentric conception of the relation to work is one where work is one of many other interests, and there is relativisation of the hegemonic value of work, refusal of extensive availability to the company and desire to preserve, through an autonomous and flexible management of time, the personal sphere apprehended as the special place for personal fulfilment. This polycentric view of existence emerged in some of the interviews in France, Italy and Belgium, not so much in Portugal and Germany. In the case of the three countries where it was more marked, this trend seems to be particularly associated with the younger generations and there are differences that result also from the type of engagement with work: for instance, in the Belgian case, there are some workers for whom work *is a cornerstone in the identity* – for these people there is an identification between life and work, and there is no space for plural interests.

Hungary is a different case regarding this point, maybe because the process of adjustment to a new type of economy is on-going: “younger people there seem to be two paths only: working a lot, which qualifies in their interpretation as careerism, or not work that much and spend more time with the family”. This implies that a bi-centric dichotomy is in place in Hungary, contrasting work and family, and the options available are not (yet) polycentric including, besides family and work, also friends, hobbies, travelling, and other interests.

Relational relation to work

The second emergent finding regards the importance of the *Relation to Others* as a major source of motivation for work, and a relevant organiser of the relation to work. The reports from Belgium, Portugal, Italy make these points very clear, and it is implicit in the Hungarian one as well. The centrality of the relational aspects regarding the individuals’ relation to work is also present in the German report, which stresses the importance of social integration for some interviewees. All of this calls attention to the fact that *Belongingness*, which is a core motive for the socio-psychological functioning (Fiske, 2004), continues to be also at the core of some patterns of relation to work, which are clearly organised around it.

The fact that we are highlighting here the *Relational motive*, as an emergent finding does not mean to imply that the literature was not aware of the importance of belongingness as an important motivation for work. The literature, as is reviewed in our State of the Art deliverable for the SpreW project, has often called attention to the *Relational Motive*, in two distinct senses: (1) as a sub-component of the Expressive relation to work and (2) as a way of expressing our need of being part of a collective. Regarding the second sense, the dimensions usually highlighted are those concerning the importance attached to a social identity, namely the one that comes by the person being defined as belonging to a certain professional group. However, what seems to emerge in some of the interviews conducted in all countries (Italy, France, Portugal, Belgium, Hungary, Germany) is also the importance of inter-personal relations in the work place as a form of maintaining a person linked to it, motivated to continue in the function, and interested in going to the workplace everyday of the week.

More than the need of being part of a social group of societal resonance, what we seem to find in some interviews across the countries involved is the need to be part of a small network of people that meet everyday or at least regularly. This is not to imply that the Relational motive in a more classical form is absent – it is not absent, and is expressed in some interviews, where people express the importance they attach to being a part of a certain professional group, and even of working for a cause related with that group (this is present in the

Portuguese report, in the Belgian and the Hungarian). And it is also present in the profiles that attach a great importance to loyalty to a company, as well, a feature particularly present in the French report. Nevertheless, the fragmentation and “privatisation” of the relational motive regarding work is also a notorious dimension that emerges from the whole of the reports. This means that the relations of proximity are to some extent replacing the relations to a reference group.

For some individuals – those who suffered discontinuities in life courses (Germany) or those who consider social and interpersonal relations as a fundamental dimension (Portugal) – the relation to work is strongly shaped by relational motives. For instance the German case: “when social bonds outside work are absent or dissatisfying, perhaps even negative in nature, the importance of contacts gained through work becomes specially great. Work acquires paramount importance above all when family proves inadequate as the primary location for social bonds” (p. 163). In turn, the Portuguese report presents some cases for which the central elements of work are relational – communication, personal contacts and social bonds are very important for self, and working relations are needed for personal balance and for positive humour. This is particularly marked for the case of women workers in the middle age group, but not exclusive.

Relational dimensions also emerge as a very important source of self-fulfilment or discontent in the Italian report. In Italy the social dimension is very important for almost age groups, not only as a value in itself, but also due to the central place it takes in the working environment. There is an orientation to relational dimensions in work, which can override content of functions, since having pleasant or unpleasant working relationships can be fundamental for defining orientations towards work life. The Italian report thus remarks: “Both young and old people value the relationship with colleagues in defining work as pleasant or unpleasant, good or bad (...) Interpersonal relationships are seen by people as the main source of self-fulfilment or discontent. The social dimension is very important for almost everyone, not only in a value in itself but also for its place in the work environment” (p. 264).

Relational dimensions also emerge as very important in some cases from the Belgian report, independently of the age group for individuals having standardised life course. Instead, and very importantly, individuals having a more individualised life course (type 2 and 4) consider social relations at work as secondary.

In Hungary, there emerged a rather generalised feeling of decreasing overall solidarity, not just in work, but also everywhere in society. “Middle-age and older generations talk with nostalgia about the socialist period, particularly about the community which formed in the factories under socialism. Nostalgia for a more united and secure work life (...)” emerges. In the same vein, in Germany, feelings of decreasing solidarity among the medium age and older groups were also signalled.

Work/Career versus Employment/Job

The third emergent dimension in the analyses of the interviews is linked to the differentiation between divergent, albeit inter-related, aspects comprising the whole experience of relating to and being a part of the *labour market*. This relationship with the *labour market* is referred to and can be marked by a differentiation between terms like: work, job, function, profession, career, employment etc. These terms all refer to somehow divergent components of that experience. Usually, whereas employment regards the structural aspect, work regards the

content aspect (Belgium). This distinction calls attention to differences between aspects outside the control of the individual – constraints and opportunities – and aspects regarding the lived experience of the subject. It is however currently also remarked in the literature the importance of the notion of “career” as another dimension necessary in order to fully take into account the relation of the individual with work. This relation can in some cases be also very clearly marked by a difference between work and career (Portugal). While *work* refers to the content aspect taken synchronically, the notion of *career* includes the same ideas but projected to a future: it implies a vision of the future, and includes the dimensions of active choice and selection among possible working paths, and therefore also the notion of progress and transformation in time (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

The Portuguese report presents the notions of career as central for organizing patterns of relation to work. Some interviewees show a strong orientation for planning courses and trajectories for their working life, and engage in an active selection of sectors and in the anticipation of progression, investing time and effort in increasing their knowledge and qualifications, as a way of preparing progression. The need to do this is very clear among young people of already high qualifications. The first years of the working lives of those engaging in expressive relations to work are strongly shaped by these concerns and activities.

In one extreme case, career supplants concerns with the content of work. The person is more focused on the dimensions of projecting a future and choosing among available options than with the content of what he is doing, or with the specific competences and knowledge of his area. Prestige and revenue of the future functions that are anticipated and targeted are the ultimate goals of his relation to work.

Still regarding the Portuguese report, for people with work but no career orientations, future activities are not anticipated, there are no plans for organising their activities within a temporal framework – and so, it is often found that these are also those with a pragmatic/instrumental relation to work. This is however not a perfect correspondence, as is always the case with typologies.

This notion of career is important, because a person can have a passionate relation to work, or an expressive relation to it, or work can be central for one’s identity without the person simultaneously being focused on and oriented to the future and concerned with continuing to make and prepare choices that orient her future work in a particular direction. This obviously implies rather individualised paths and patterns of choice, precluding or limiting the person’s commitment to other organisational dimensions: for instance, loyalty to a company is not compatible with the notion that one’s working path should be oriented by concerns with own development and with the acquisition of both more skills and higher compensations.

Regarding the several dimensions of the relation to the labour market, it was found (in the Belgian case) that in pragmatic orientations people are more concerned with structural issues, and the notion of employment dominates, whereas in reflexive relations the substantive dimensions are privileged and work, not employment, is the central concern. In turn, when employment is the central concern, standardised courses determine that “Work is a constraint to experience positively” whereas individualised courses reveal that “Work is a mean to earn money”.

In Hungary, Differences between work and employment are important; since they provide an important means for distinguish the different types of role that being a worker plays in

people's life. It can assume a central concern for individual's identity - "Work as a source of fulfilment" -, and it can also play a secondary role in people's existence, but being significant at the same time - "Work as a meaningful activity". When, on the contrary, employment, and not work, is the central motivation for the person, orientations turn into "Work as a source of money".

Although not resorting directly to the notion of career, the French report highlights the importance of career as the construction of a path for a stronger individualisation in the relations to work, evidenced mainly when there is an intensive professional investment linked to a desire to develop, which implies a relationship with work focused on the future. It comments that it would be too simplistic, however, to draw an exclusive mechanical link between dissatisfaction at work and the limited commitment to a career.

Some individuals may deliberately pursue a rationale of career divestment when they are intense involved in matters outside the employee sphere – also visible in some Portuguese profiles. Here projects for lifelong learning and for higher degrees (masters and PhDs) have high relevance.

A final point worth emphasising regards what happens when people with an expressive engagement with work, for whom work occupies a central position in their lives, and who always had their eyes on the future, never ceasing to develop their careers, begin to see retirement approaching. If the strong career investment brought disruption to other spheres of life, this can be a moment of suffering, as expressed in some interviews (Portugal, Germany), but it is often a difficult moment also when this disruption is absent.

Patterns of relation to work and their relation with other spheres

Work and Family

The comparative analysis between the six countries regarding work and family reveals the presence of a certain gendered pattern of relation around these two spheres in the Belgian, Hungarian, French and Portuguese contexts. This effect translates a differentiating tendency among orientations for conciliation, namely: in Belgium, conciliation and time management is more central to women, just like in France, where time and mental charge between work and family are more in competition, and in Portugal, since child care and family assistance may turn into a source of conflict between these two domains. In Hungary, a new trend is emerging because a higher orientation of younger women to career is also a reflection of a general fear of loosing family and societal stability. The Hungarian report thus remarks that during prompted debates during the group discussions, younger women, were "seen as pushy careerists who do not care about having a family, only about their career and success at work. It was possible for group members to imagine a different type of young woman as well but the image of a pushy careerist young woman was the most dominant type that emerged" (p. 245).

In a broader perspective, in Portugal, the younger group declares absence of conflicts between family and work, and often narratives of family support during university years and first working years emerge as a core factor for stability in their life trajectories. In Italy, the importance of family support is also very much highlighted. Moreover, also in Italy, family background (support, level of education and work status) is seen as a relevant factor for shaping attitudes and patterns of relation to work. In Portugal, again, and in contrast to younger ones, older interviewees often refer having had problematic relationships in the past

due too much involvement in work. Narratives of divorces happening due to conflicts between family and work are frequent.

Work and other spheres

Considering the relationship between work and other spheres of life of interviewees, the comparison of the six countries shows two patterns: the first pattern, more clearly present in France and Italy, indicates a polycentric conception of life, where work is only one valorised element of identity. This pattern is especially clear for the younger.

In turn, the second pattern emerges in Portugal and Germany, and France reflecting no evidence of political commitments, trade unions or other involvements at the level of civil society. In France, when some interviewees – those who seek to find a balance between work and other spheres of life – are discussing their experience outside work, state that they made an investment only in relation to themselves, their families, their children and friends and not in relation to actions more focused on the ‘public realm. In Germany interviewees in general do not show any political commitment or serious concern with trade union questions neither do they seem to be involved in initiatives on the level of civil society. In Hungary, there are groups who search for other activities that can support their identity, but this is less present among the younger generations.

2.2 Results – patterns of relation to work and structural variables

2.2.1 Gender

A comparative analysis across the national reports of the six countries shows significant effects of gender regarding the patterns of relation to work. In the contexts of Italy, France and Germany, this variable emerges as more important than age: in the former case, it’s only among the younger group that gender borders are less clear, while in the latter two cases it’s the presence of young children which determines the differences in the orientations among men and women. This may also be true in the Portuguese context, since younger women who are at the beginning of their career show a strongly expressive/reflexive orientation to work, but as yet we do not know whether or not that will be altered with maternity. Also in Germany, it is the women without children or with adult children who have mainly similar social patterns of relationship to work as men.

In the Belgian context there are no fundamental differences between men and women in terms of relation to work, although women reveal higher orientations to reflexive patterns (self development, meaningfulness) and relations. This last result is also present among middle age women in the Portuguese sample, since they are the group who displays more relational orientations. Time is also more central to Belgian women, since managing and conciliation between family and work seems to be more important than for men. This may indicate some agreement with the first pattern referred (family and children determine gender borders), although there is evidence of a re-definition and re-enactment of gender roles in the Belgian couples.

In the Hungarian context, women who invest in their career are suffering from strong cultural and societal pressures, since they are seen as aggressive and with low orientation for family issues, and this is expressed in negative stereotypes, mainly for younger ones. Regarding men, this behaviour is considered as normal, or normative, and not seen as negative. This pattern

also reflects some results obtained in the Portuguese interviews, albeit in a more attenuated form and mainly for older women: older women with strong investments in their career development report having felt conflicts at the level of family and difficulties for conciliation of career and family. However, most of the men in the same situation of strong career investment do not express any negative experiences or emotions regarding the conciliation between family and work spheres.

2.2.2 Age

Comparisons between the six countries regarding age indicate the presence of convergent patterns but also of diversity. In what concerns similarities, results show that age seems relatively independent of specific relations to work, with the exception of Germany. Nevertheless, it's also possible to identify some common specificity associated to age groups in the other countries. The most salient one is related to instability and insecurity of employment among the younger, a fact, which is considered as something to be expected for this particular group in the French sample, and also viewed as such in the Belgian context. On the other hand, this situation is a source of concerns among the older people when they think about precariousness of the younger, although they never experienced it – this result is transversal also to Italy and Portugal.

Another common pattern emerges between Italy and France, reflecting the involvement of the younger group in work, and their high expectations, but also a marked orientation to ethical and moral values within this context. In the case of France, the younger are the group who control more their working time, while Italian results report an extension in the period of stabilisation for the trajectories of this particular people.

In what concerns national diversity, the Belgian results show that age may be related to perceptions of motivation – middle age and older think they are more motivated to work than younger (cultural changes and low psychological contracts to work are pointed as causes for their lower motivation) -, and to perceptions of personal stagnation, reflecting the IT difficulties of older people. It's also this group who presents more explanations for the diversity in the trajectories of age groups.

On the other hand, distinct conceptions of organisations are associated to age in the Belgian context, with the older more oriented to communitarian principles and the younger to liberal ones (open organizations), but the quality of social relations at work emerges as independent from this variable. However, the Belgian report also reminds that age groups are not homogeneous groups regarding their relation to work.

In the Hungarian context, same age can mean different generational belonging, depending on the group, and the relation to work seems to be more related to socialisation processes, with old age being viewed as something with low valorisation. This receives societal re-enforcement from the little support old people get in Hungary by the actual social security system, with the pensions getting very low and getting lower as one turns older within the uncompensated inflation.

Germany is the only country, which reports a direct association between age and patterns of relation to work. Within this particular context, younger are marked by strong professional ambitions, are oriented to challenges, competence and quality of work. Many fear unemployment but adaptation and change are strategies for minimizing risks of situations

from this nature. On the other hand, middle age shows expert knowledge and organizational skills. Routine and instrumentality have replaced some of the previous expressiveness. Chances of career progression are low and defensive strategies are a way of dealing with labour market. Finally, elder are strongly identified with their position and specialization is an ambivalent resource – security, at the internal level, but vulnerability at a broader level. This group also experiences high work pressure and feels loss of respect.

2.2.3 Educational qualifications

Considering educational qualifications, only four of the six countries have analysed its role in a more systematized way (Italy, Hungary, France and Portugal). Among these it's possible to identify two distinct patterns, one where high levels of education have impact on the centrality of work in self's identity (France) and on expressive orientations to work and progressive trajectories (Portugal). On the other hand, educational qualifications seem to be relatively independent from patterns of relation to work (Italy and Hungary), being more related to socializing processes in the Hungarian context. Besides these patterns, it's also possible to realize that formalized education is source of modernization and power for the younger Italian group and is a crucial factor for a second chance in less normalized trajectories, just like long life learning, in the Portuguese context.

3. Intergenerational relations

3.1 Introduction

All the teams involved gathered additional information about inter-generational relations in the work context by organising focused group discussions. The interviews had gathered some information about these relations, but all the teams felt the need to complement and extent it by conducting discussion groups focused on this issue. These groups involved, on the whole, from 12 to 25 people, and were conducted at a point when almost all, or even all, the individual interviews were completed, and the questions that needed to be more intensively looked at were identified. The syntheses that follow in the next sections are based mainly on the direct reports of the group discussions, but in some points are also complemented with material from the individual interviews.

3.2 Main concepts of analysis

The approach of the six countries regarding the analytic concepts for analysing intergenerational relations presents points of convergence, but also some aspects of diversity. In what concerns convergence, all the reports tried to identify dimensions such as: Attitudes towards generations (Belgium), narratives of different generations (Belgium, Germany, Portugal), transmission of knowledge between generations (Belgium, Italy, Germany, France), Conflict and cooperation between younger and older groups (all), competition within same age people (France, Portugal), gender and work (Hungary, France).

3.3 Denial of the importance of age

Some reports, like the Belgian, Hungarian and Italian ones, refer that the issues of age and generational relations in the work place are not spontaneously raised, that there is no explicit and unprompted reference to conflicts based on them. The German report makes the point that there is no explicit conflict of generations. In Hungary, age seems to be unspoken, but there is an expressed fear of growing old, since those who feel old complain about it. In the Portuguese context, initial denial of inter-generational conflicts was followed, in the discussion groups, by a second phase, when the elaboration of difficulties emerged, giving rise to the discussion of aspects of potential issues between generations. Also in Belgium, when the discussion groups comprised people with a more pragmatic type of engagement with work, there were clearly discourses about the need of older workers to leave and make stable jobs available for younger workers.

All of these observations might be indicating that age might be a sensitive issue, functioning in the work context as a taboo like sex, with people not always willing to debate it. However, unspoken and un-debated issues of a society are very frequently central ones for it, and this might also be the case of age in the work context.

Moreover, often when confronted with direct questions regarding the importance of age in the work context, many of the interviewees remarked that people were different because of personal reasons, and not because of their age. The Portuguese report makes the observation that this type of internal explanations and attributions do not contribute to social change (Tajfel, 1982). Social movements are largely based on a perception of the characteristics of the situation as dependent upon a set of structural circumstances affecting a group with a common fate (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Internal explanations of conflicts are less compatible, then, with the search for alternatives and for change. So, perhaps, this denial of the importance of age may be also a form of re-enforcing permanence, and the status quo, and is not favouring an engagement with societal conditions that may bring change about.

None of what is said above is to imply that age in the work context is a direct and unproblematic synonym of conflict. In fact, age and intergenerational relations in the work place have emerged from the interviews as presenting both cooperative and conflictive dimensions, and as a very rich and multi-dimensional topic much capable of shedding light to a number of trends for the future. We will first summarise findings regarding cooperation, and then those regarding conflict.

3.4 Cooperative intergenerational relations

When set in the context of work relations, intergenerational cooperation was expressed mainly in knowledge transfer, and apprenticeship with older generations. In the French report, active cooperation between young employees and their more experienced seniors is remarked to be the most frequent situation, clearly over-passing conflict situations. In France, however, younger are less protected by the new laws, so passing on knowledge to them may be easier and less conflictive than in other countries.

The other reports are not so specific regarding which is the more frequent case in their interviews and discussion groups – conflict or cooperation. However, they all identify and report cases of cooperation, and, in particular, knowledge transfer. There are several narratives depicting close-by relationships with older colleagues or seniors when the person

first entered the organisation, and identifying several dimensions of knowledge transmission. For all countries, this knowledge transfer may include: (1) informal knowledge about the history of the company and the operation of a department, which transcends formal function description, and sometimes happens informally; (2) professional knowledge of the technical and formal type; (3) practical and procedural information. Knowledge transfer is important in all these three spheres.

Another point of convergence for several countries seems to be that cooperation regarding knowledge transmission is easier when the age gap is bigger – it is shown in the reports of France, Portugal, and deducible from the German one. The Italian report also signals that the transmission of skills continues to happen more frequently and easily in more traditional sectors, such as: metal industry, construction (activities from the industrial sector, mainly).

Most countries also signal that knowledge transmission will happen more easily providing that the role of transmitter is recognised and is not seen as a prerequisite to eviction, and that cooperation with beginners is much more frequent when individuals are not overwhelmed by the stress of strict production aims (France, Portugal), or by intense internal competition (France, Portugal).

The French report also remarks that experienced employees may also consider that the return of their investment as an “integrator” of young people is too low, in view of the rapid turnover of young employees in certain professional branches. Moreover, in a climate of fighting for places, retaining a monopoly over the possession of skills then emerges for some employees as a means of curbing the increased insecurity of their social position and neutralising the threat – objective or perceived – that the new recruits represent to their future.

Similar preoccupations are expressed in the Belgian reports, where it is observed that older employees may feel that they have nothing to teach the younger, because the younger are hired for peripheral tasks. Also in Belgium some older workers explain that current work rhythms do not leave rooms for knowledge transfer.

As a conclusion, the French report signals how – for fostering cooperation - the intervention of the company cannot be limited to the arrangement of the physical space and the constitution of groups with a mix of ages. Instead, the company must also contribute to creating conditions favourable at the level of everyday organisation of the activity (particularly by easing pressure) so that a dynamic of cooperation can come into play between the generations.

3.5 Potential sources and dimensions of intergenerational tensions

It is also possible to retain some aspects responsible for potential conflicts between generations in the work context, which are not homogenous when the national contexts are compared. The next sections summarise the main findings regarding 4 dimensions of potential conflict that emerged as important in the interviews and discussion groups.

3.5.1 Instability, precariousness and insecurity versus stability in work positions and in social security benefits

This dimension emerges in the reports of all the countries involved in the study. In the Belgian report, the older group manifests ambivalent statements about the differences that

characterize the life courses of younger and older people: older people remark how life is easier for younger people in many regards, but how their relation to work is affected by more instability and precariousness than theirs. In sum: “older workers say that their working conditions were harder; however, this statement concerns work, not employment.” The employment conditions are clearly also seen as better for the older generation in all countries. In Italy, social inequalities between generations are seen as real, mainly in relation to the distribution of welfare contribution and professional stability. The same in France, where precariousness of the younger is a strong societal issue, that is clear in the interviews. In Portugal, concerns with precariousness emerge in connection with both the private (mainly banking) and the public sectors, due to recent reforms. In Hungary, this dimension comes enmeshed also with all the concerns of a transition to a new type of economy, and is also very much present. In Germany, although present, it does not seem to be so pregnant.

3.5.2 Accumulated experience versus formal knowledge

There are several mentions to the fact that are tensions regarding the opposition between, on one hand, those who have experience, and concrete expertise in a certain field or company, but lack formal certificates attesting that, and, on the other hand, those who enter the company possessing formal knowledge, and/or high degrees obtained in the educational system. This seems to be a central dimension of the tensions encountered regarding inter-generational relations, because normally the experienced people are older, and those with a formal diploma are younger.

In the Italian report the existence of this tension between formal knowledge and experience seems to be present: “Young people can be those who (...) are seen as more secure of themselves because they enter with a good level of education. People from the older generation experience the tension between formalized knowledge and degrees and experience”. And also: “they built a solid experience and now they are “threatened” by younger people who have titles and reach decision-making positions as soon as they enter jobs”. Still regarding the Italian situation, knowledge transmission from the part of those more experienced becomes a problematic issue because the hierarchies in skills and competencies are disrupted, with younger people with formal knowledge taking power positions. This is true especially in the service sector, either public or private, where the introduction of technologies made most of the experienced worker obsolete, although still safe in their jobs. However, still in Italy, in the public sector and in very hierarchical private organisation such as banks, the principle of seniority still counts as for the money reward and career advancement. In the service sector, both public and private, the introduction of technologies “turned the most of the experienced worker obsolete (p. 267). This finding is convergent also with the German remarks that in some branches there is a loss of importance of experiential knowledge resources, since experiential knowledge cannot be forced into certain technical systems, above all computer-based documentation.

The French report is very clear about the existence of this tension, more strongly felt in cases “when the organisational reforms occur at the same time as the arrival of large numbers of younger people, used as a kind of “Trojan horse” of modernisation”. In these cases older people may feel that they do not know anything worth passing on to their successors and may also be tempted to hold the newcomers responsible for the situation. This is also exactly the situation encountered for the Banking sector in the Portuguese interviews. Also in the

Portuguese report, similar concerns and negative experiences are reported regarding the Public administration, where a reform is taking place.

Taking this issue from the other side, there are also concerns from the younger people in the organisations about the older ones discarding their suggestions despite the fact that they are experts in the issue (Portugal). Also, young people may feel insufficiently recognised when their suggestions are not appreciated in the light of their intrinsic value but invalidated on the pretext of their young age (France). The age of the young people, in this case, is interpreted as indicating a lack of credible and pertinent competences that denies them all professional legitimacy.

3.5.3 Innovation versus experience

The comparison between the six national reports shows that there is another dimension closely connected to the above one, which is also very important for organizing discourses and stories about intergenerational relationships. This is the polarity between innovation and experience. This is an extremely central dimension, widely used in every country.

Everybody converges that experience belongs to older people, while younger individuals bring about innovation and creativity. The problems regard the relative social value of each dimension. Experience is sometimes depicted as positive, but it also sometimes negatively valued. The same could happen for innovation, in theory, but in practice, innovation is rarely de-valued. This is of course linked to the fact that the values endorsed in the work place are linked to those values, which are culturally regarded as valuable, and innovation is highly valued in all contexts.

Complaints and fears about experience being devalued in practice when contrasted with innovation are recurrent and convergent for most of the countries involved: in Hungary, it is remarked that the value of experience is declining, though not everywhere. In Portugal there are interviewees indicating that when experience is depicted as negative it is presented as a form of making people more inflexible and that being old is often understood in the organisations as meaning that one is stuck to a particular epoch and reluctant to innovation. In the same vein, the Hungarian report states, “older people were blamed for sticking to their old habits and routines, although contrary opinions were also voiced admitting the importance of the experience and competence which older people have”. The Belgian report adds that being older is sometimes described as being reluctant to innovation. In turn, the French report states that, for the older employees, the lack of recognition of the value of experience in the workplace leads to inter-generation tension. It also remarks that in companies functioning according to internal market logic, career management may lead to direct competition between experienced and younger employees to fill certain posts. Moreover, certain new strategic orientations may also result in a devaluation of the experience of the older employees, and by extension push them into adopting hostile behaviour towards the younger employees.

All of this becomes and even bigger problem when innovation is over-valued over experience. And, in fact, innovation – linked to modernisation and creativity - is seldom or never seen as something negative, and it is rather difficult to de-value it. When innovation is being debated, young are instead often depicted as bringing “new blood” – modernity, innovation – to organizations. This seems to be the case in many organisations and sectors across all countries. In Hungary, for instance, employers prefer younger people when hiring employees.

In Portugal this is a very central concern of middle generation and older employees. In France it emerged too.

A finding usually associated with this one, is the linkage between IT and innovation. This connection also means more value attached to the younger group, and further differentiation between older and younger people. IT are a source of modernization in the last decades, hence representing a source of competency that younger have acquired through formal and informal means, and related to perceptions of more power over the older. Within this particular technical context (IT), experiential knowledge loses its ground and creativity and innovation are the big value dimensions.

IT are for the older generation the symbol of all major changes that occurred in work this last twenty years: changes in organisational models with the emergence of the network enterprise, outsourcing, development of services, automation of informational tasks, codification of tasks, polyvalence, flexibility... ICT are, in a sense, the figurehead of twenty years of mutations (Belgium).

In the Portuguese report there are explicit references to the difficulties, which are present among the older people, when IT skills and changing working methods in some areas are the focus. This dimension can turn into a source of conflict within relationships between younger and older groups. There are numerous mentions in the interviews and the groups about the classical example of older people having more trouble with technological innovations, and namely with computer innovation.

Sometimes, however, innovation is depicted as “pushing in the wrong direction”, and is associated with young people attempting to climb up to the top as quickly as possible (Portugal, France).

In sum, in theory, the two poles of innovation and experience are both positive and complementary and it can easily be argued that both innovation and experience are indispensable in the work context. However, if one term of this polarity becomes more socially over-valued and desirable than the other, the potential complementarities disappear and are substituted by competition. There are indications in most countries that there is a fear that experience will be less and less valued in the future as compared to innovation.

3.5.4 Mutual stereotypes regarding age groups

Despite the generalised denial of the importance of age, in all countries there are indications of the existence and use of negative attributions and stereotypes regarding age groups. These can of course be intensively used (in times of conflict) or disqualified as un-important (in times of cooperation). They are nevertheless present and always available as a resource for times of concern and conflict. Moreover, these traits present similar dimensions across countries.

The negative traits and characteristics the older workers frequently attribute to the younger ones are linked with a lack of motivation to work (Belgium, France, Portugal). In some cases, however older workers are prepared to explain this by the high risk of becoming redundant that affects the younger (France, Portugal). Some stories also highlight the lack of initiative and concentration of the younger; and others depict the competitiveness of the younger. For instance: In the French report there are indications that some older interviewees think that that

the behaviour of young workers has been deteriorating since 20 years: recurrent absenteeism, inadequate behaviours, lack of professional rigour and investment, unreliability, etc.

As mentioned above, the more recurrent stereotypes about older people regard immobilism, stagnation and lack of willingness to progress.

In Hungary, generational conflicts at work are framed very much with the categories of family conflicts. One of the Hungarian discussion groups remarked that “the older generation forces her ideas about the right ways of life onto the younger generation.” This may indicate that in a country in transition, stereotypes of generations in the work place still resemble stereotypes in the family and new categories and concepts where the private and the public sphere are more clearly distinct are still to consolidate.

In Germany, older and younger generations have restricted contact in their companies and perhaps this brought less material of this type.

Stereotypes mainly concern the younger and the older generations; the mid-generation seem absent in discourses about generations, however, this latest seems to be the more critical regarding young workers. The discourse of one generation regarding another is more controversial when employment is at stake (not work). The mid age group is perhaps the one that feels more threatened by the concurrence of young workers (Belgium).

3.5.5 Competition within same age group

The final dimension of analysis emerges only in an explicit form in the Portuguese and French reports. This does not of course allow us to deduce that issues of competition between members of the same generation are absent from other countries, just that they are more pregnant in certain countries, and Portugal and France are included in this category. In Portugal, the competition between people from the same generation was described as having two main foundations: the scarcity of power positions available for members of one generation and the perceptions of having equal worth and qualifications as those from the same generation. The difficulties experienced for accepting that members of the same generation should have more power and prestige were clearly highlighted in the discussion groups, and these two factors were presented as being strong sources of conflict for people of the same generation. In France, competition is mainly present when same age peers are more experienced: “friction is more apparent between adjacent age groups – between the youngest and employees in the intermediate age group.”

4. Concluding remarks

4.1 Regarding patterns of relation to work

The above-presented overview of the six reports from the interviews conducted in Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Portugal can now be briefly summarised in the following points:

1. Unanimous was the finding of the centrality of work for identity development, as well as the importance of the expressive relations to work. People expect from work opportunities

of self-fulfilment, self-development, creativity, meaning. These were somehow expected results, that were counterbalanced and qualified by a number of other findings:

- *The fragmentation of the expressive type* – there are multiple forms of maintaining an expressive relation to work. One central force that multiplies and fragments these forms is the extent of the efforts invested in achieving a balance between work and other spheres of life. Although there are some expressive forms of engagement to work for which success in life is subordinated to success in work, there are also other types of engagement which are *Expressive*, but more balanced – here work supports self-development, as expressed in the Belgian report, or work is important, but complement other spheres, as expressed in the French report. Mainly in young workers, and more clearly in France, Belgium and Italy, this may correspond to a polycentric relation to work. In Germany and Portugal the young and qualified show strong ambitions and are very focused on career advancement, showing less attempts at balance and multiple interests.
- *The relevance of the trajectories*: another force pushing for differentiation within the expressive relation to work are the individual trajectories. Linear and normalised trajectories are more associated with expressive relations of moderate force, and irregular trajectories, with discontinuities seem to be more associated with more intense re-investment, when re-investment was possible.
- *The pragmatic relation to work is present*, surely, and often results from difficulties in life trajectories, with disenchantment after some years, with routine. It is also associated with expectations of early retirement.
- *The rise of a polycentric tendency?* The tendency to view work as one and just one of the centres around which existential meaning is organised seems to be raising, namely among the younger. In France and Italy this tendency was clearer.
- *The importance and the “privatisation” of the relational motive* – the relational and belongingness motive came out as extremely central, but in a more privatised form than before. This means that the need to belong and relate is not just referred to a professional group, but to a network of personal relationships in the work place.
- *The orientation to the future* as expressed in concerns with career development is also very present within the young and middle age groups engaged in an expressive relation to work. Here projects for lifelong learning and for higher degrees (masters and PhDs) have high relevance.
- *Gender* has always a role in shaping patterns of relation to work, but in some countries this role is more marked (Hungary), and in other less marked (Belgium). For the younger generation, still without children gender related issues are less salient.

4.2 Regarding intergenerational relations

Regarding now the main findings of the inter-relational relations in the work context:

- Tension appears between players who are suffering (or who are afraid of suffering in the near future) from the insufficiency or absence of recognition

- Tension is made more intense by certain management options that make unbalance the possible equilibrium between experience and innovation, and namely by a depreciation in the productive advantage of experience and a dilution of the added value of older employees
- This may increase the feeling employees have that they are considered to be interchangeable.
- This may also result in an accrued emotional detachment from work.
- This is congruent with and can be enhanced by the current focus on polyvalence and constant decision making and change of organisations for the construction of a career

Thus it appears to be necessary to inverse the usual perspective by apprehending lack of satisfaction in the workplace as a cause rather than a consequence of the deterioration of cooperation between the generations.

This may be done by:

1. Devising common organisational and team objectives as a buffer for conflicts - higher level, common goals reduce conflict between and within generations, reduce competition and increase cooperation.
2. Paying attention to organizational climate - has influence on conflict relations, on competitive pressure. Reducing intergenerational conflicts at this level demands that attention is paid to these points:
 - de-valuation of experience coupled with over-valuation of unquestioned and non-negotiated forms of innovation;
 - the ways the interaction between stable and unstable contract workers are organised
 - how same-generation competition, especially for the “sandwich” generation, may be fostered by organisational rules, culture and space arrangements.
3. Introducing changes at the level of career planning may also be a way of reducing conflicts
4. Insistence upon the need to devise fair and transparent evaluation systems is also a way to reduce conflicts.
5. Institutional instruments for re-valuing experience and knowledge transfer and maintaining high levels of debate and negotiation of the different needs can also be ways of reducing conflicts in this context.
6. Re-framing innovation in accordance with the big picture of the team and organizational goals, questioning the “intrinsic goodness of innovation are also forms of dealing with conflict, both in this context and others.

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Chapter 2: Report from Belgium

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Introduction

This report is the national report of the Belgian team in the framework of the SPREW project. It concerns workpackage 3, the qualitative approach of generational approach of the social patterns of relations to work. It consists of the analysis of 31 narrative interviews and 3 discussion groups. The first point of the report describes the methodological design of this qualitative approach. The second point proposes a categorisation that crosses two key variables: the attitude towards work (pragmatic or subjective) and the nature of the life course (standardised or individualised). Four types of relation to work are proposed; those types are detailed in the third point. In a next step, in point four, discourses about age groups are analysed. We identify five key issues that came up in the interviews: attitude, modernisation, trajectories, human relations, knowledge and ways of working. We put forward the convergences and divergences regarding these issues and we look at the articulations between visions of generations at work and particular types of relation to work. Finally, in a fifth point, some provisional conclusions are suggested.

1. Methodological considerations

1.1 Narrative interviews

1.1.1 Selection of the informants and interviews overview

The option was to realise a set of interviews in some selected organisations. Those organisations are included in five sectors: local government, hospital, steel industry, IT sector and a commercial SME. Those sectors were chosen regarding to the differences and the complementarities between their structures (small, middle and large; bureaucracy or flexible organisation), their activities (production and services) or their management (public, semi-public and private).

The limitation of the investigation to five sectors certainly reduces the range of the analyses. However, the addition of background information for each sector facilitates the data saturation, which founds the validity of a narrative approach¹. Moreover, it allows focusing the analyses on the research topics: the social framework of involvement in work and intergenerational issues.

1. Bertaux D., “L’approche biographique : sa validité méthodologique, ses potentialités”, dans *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, vol. LXIX, 1980, p. 205.

Summary of Interviews

Sex/Nb	Age Group	Education	Profession	Sector	Family	Children
M7	G1 (19)	Low	Metalworker	Steel industry	Single	0
M1	G1 (23)	Middle	Worker in logistics	Commercial SME	Cohabit	0
W3	G1 (29)	Middle	Clerical worker	Local government	Married	0
M10	G1 (30)	Middle	Metalworker	Steel industry	Divorced	1
W1	G1 (22)	High	Nurse	Hospital	Single	0
M13	G1 (26)	High	Sales manager	IT Company	Married	1
W2	G1 (28)	High	Customer service assistant	Commercial SME	Single	0
M14	G1 (28)	High	Logistic assistant	Commercial SME	Cohabit	0
W4	G1 (28)	High	Customer support engineer	IT Company	Married	0
W14	G1 (29)	High	Marketing assistant	Commercial SME	Married	3
W9	G2 (31)	Middle	Web designer	IT Company	Separated	3
W10	G2 (33)	High	Customer service manager	Commercial SME	Married	1
W11	G2 (34)	High	Administrative manager	Hospital	Married	2
M3	G2 (36)	Middle	Clerical worker	Hospital	Married	2
W5	G2 (36)	High	Chief receptionist	Hospital	Married	4
M2	G2 (36)	High	Accountant	Hospital	Cohabit	0
W12	G2 (38)	High	Logistic manager	Commercial SME	Married	2
W13	G2 (38)	High	Head of a training department	IT Company	Divorced	3
M11	G2 (40)	Middle	Metalworker	Steel industry	Married	2
W15	G2 (40)	High	Project manager	IT Company	Single	0
W8	G2 (43)	High	Social worker	Local government	Married	2
M4	G2 (44)	Low	Metalworker	Steel industry	Married	3
M15	G2 (47)	Low	Building worker	Local government	Married	2
M5	G3 (50)	Low	Metalworker	Steel industry	Married	2
M6	G3 (52)	Low	Gardener	Local government	Married	2
M12	G3 (51)	Low	Metalworker	Steel industry	Married	3
M8	G3 (50)	Middle	Metalworker	Steel industry	Cohabit	0
W6	G3 (57)	High	Clerical Worker	Hospital	Divorced	5

W7	G3 (58)	High	Clerical Worker	Local government	Divorced	1
W16	G3 (58)	High	Human resources manager	Commercial SME	Divorced	2
M9	G3 (63)	High	Team manager	IT Company	Married	2

Summary by Family and Level of Education

	Family				Level of education			Women + Men Total
	Men No Child	Men Child	Women No Child	Women Child	Low	Mid	High	
< 30	3	3	4	1	1	5	5	11
30 - 50	1	4	1	7	2	2	9	13
> 50	1	4	0	3	3	1	4	8
Total	5	11	5	11	6	8	18	32

1.1.2 Methodological design

Through the narrative approach, 31 semi-structured and *comprehensive*² interviews were conducted. In this perspective, the informants are “not questioned about their opinions but because they have a precious knowledge”³. They are not an item in a sample: they are reasonable diversified sources of information. The researcher’s attitude is qualified by his empathy. He investigates without strong preliminary hypotheses or prejudices. On the contrary, he tries to progressively understand the “reasons why” individuals have specific views regarding the issue. The method also recommends proximity between the interviewer and the interviewees. The researcher must avoid to be “neutral” or in contradiction with the informant to encourage him to “express his deepest knowledge”⁴.

The interviews were also *narrative*: the main line of the interviews is to draw out *life stories*. D. Bertaux⁵ defines the “life story” as a narrative and discursive production, “a description close to the (subjectively and objectively) lived story”. It refers to extensive or specific narrations: “there is a “life story” when an individual tells a part of his personal story to another one”.

Each interview was structured in two parts.

- In the first part of the interview, details about the biographical and professional course were collected. The questions concerned: firstly the social framework of socialisation (family background, education...); secondly, integration to work (entry routes to work,

2. Kaufmann J.-C, *L’entretien compréhensif*, Nathan, Paris, 1994.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

4. *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

5. Bertaux D., *L’enquête et ses méthodes. Le récit de vie*, Armand Colin, Paris, 2005.

first job experiences...); thirdly, the current employment context (organisation, authority, functions, perspectives).

- In the second part of the interviews, the subjective positions were clarified: values and attitudes of the interviewees (about the importance of schooling and initial projects; experience of insecurity; past and current jobs; the perception of social, family and gender roles; the perception of generations at work and intergenerational issues). As much as possible, the questions were directly linked to the information provided in the first part of the interview.

The duration of an interview ranges from 45 minutes to two hours. Each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed. When possible, the interviews were made at the workplace, with several interviews in the same organisation.

1.1.3 Method for content analysis

For the analysis of interviews, the work is organised in two steps.

In a first step, we apply *collective hermeneutics*⁶ to a selection of six interviews (two in each age group). Collective hermeneutics is a method for collectively interpreting texts, particularly socio-biographies. The purpose is to make visible the latent sense in an individual discourse. It means to understand, not the individual but his relation to a number of social situations or objects (employment, security of existence, family, money...). The hypothesis is that these relations reflect the interiorisation⁷ of the social structures by the individual and, then, provide information about the significance of these structures.

The method consists in interpreting collectively (a group of at least three researchers) the full text of an interview. This collective approach prevents that the prejudices of a single researcher influence the analysis: every interpretation is discussed by the team and need to be justified by the content of the interview. The collective interpretation must lead to a common agreement resulting from rational arguments between the analysts.

Practically, the text of the interview is divided in sense units. The analyse is sequential and three successive levels of interpretation are considered for each sense unit:

- *Level 1, the manifest sense.* — The analysts must agree on *what “is said” in the text*. The text is paraphrased to “translate” it in the common sense.
- *Level 2, the intention within the discourse.* — The aim is to make explicit *the sense that the interviewee gives to his discourse*. What does he want to say? What does he say about himself? There are no objective criteria to validate the interpretations, however all information about the context can be useful.

6. Molitor M., “L’herméneutique collective” dans Rémy J. et Ruquoy D., *Méthodes d’analyse de contenu et sociologie*, Bruxelles, Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis, 1990, pp.19-36.

7. The *interiorisation* is a socio-psychological process that allows the individual to understand and to give sense to the world in which he is implied, as a social reality. Berger P., Luckmann T, *The social construction of reality*, Penguin Books, 1986.

- *Level 3, the “non intentional” discourse.* — The method assumes that the discourse reveals more than the explicit sense. Unconsciously, the interviewee also provides information that reveals *the latent sense of his discourse*. He talked about his vision of society, about his values, his conception of work, etc. To clarify the latent sense is sometimes helpful to give coherence to the discourse when contradictions are observed at the explicit level.

These three levels of analysis do not conclude the interpretation exercise of the empirical material. The collective hermeneutic approach supports the elaboration of conceptual categories. A *conceptual category*⁸ is not a rubric, a code or a theme. It represents the *meaning* of a phenomenon. Rubrics, codes or themes are “classification” tools; they help to identify and classify pieces of text according to different topics. Categories already content the interpretation of a material, the meaning of a phenomenon.

In a second step, these conceptual categories⁹ were applied to all the empirical material in a software-supported analysis. The software is a tool, not a method. It was used in a comprehensive perspective to support the explicative model in the interviewees’ discourse and to support the progressive construction of an interpretative scheme.

Nvivo7 allowed us going through a large empirical material (round 700 pages) in a reasonable time. It helps to code, to classify, to sort and to arrange. It provides transversal overviews or cross-views of thematic issues throughout the whole documents.

1.2 Group discussions

The narrative interviews gave mainly information about the individual’s relation to work. In most of the cases, the question of intergenerational relations was raised but was of secondary importance. Entering into the complexity of relational issues requires having multiple views. Therefore, the group interviews focuses on relational issues between generations.

The framework and the epistemological assumptions of the *group analysis method*¹⁰ inspired the organisation of the group discussions and the content analyses. However, the design was adapted in order to encounter the practical constraints of our research.

1.2.1 Selection of the informants and groups overview

Three group discussions with mixed age groups (round 15 individuals) were conducted in three sectors: IT, steel industry and healthcare. Each group required round three hours discussion.

The constitution of the groups for collective discussion follows the sampling strategy for the individual interviews. As well as for the analyses of narrative interviews, this solution contributes reducing the complexity of situations that are discussed. Individuals enter the

8. Paillé P. et Mucchielli A., *L’analyse qualitative en sciences humaines et sociales*, Paris, Armand Colin, (Collection U), 2003.

9. The list of categories and attributes that support the software analysis are annexed to this report.

10. Van Campenhoudt L., Chaumont J.-M. et Franssen A., *La méthode d’analyse en groupe*, Dunod, Paris, 2005.

discussion with a quite similar professional background and they can directly focus on the topic. However, in the selection of individuals for the groups, we have paid attention to the different age groups and to the different organisations and professions. Gender and ethnical origins were also considered in the selection.

For the composition of groups, we collaborated with the branches of a major trade union in these sectors. Most of the group members were union representatives. Through their position, they have to face intergenerational issues and so, they were able to give a large picture of what happens in organisations.

1.2.2 Methodological design

In the methodological perspective, each participant is considered “like a social actor in the social relations in which he is engaged”¹¹. He is invited to co-produce the analysis with the researchers thanks to his reflexive competencies.

Taking into account the sampling strategy, participants had quite concrete but different experiences regarding the issue. These differences were fruitful for the discussion. Each proposition and position had to be justified or detailed through examples to be understandable by everyone. Contrasted positions and divergences made necessary clarifying and discussing local particularities and specific circumstances.

To support and structure the collection of information, a directive discussion framework with precise discussion steps was proposed to the participants. After a short and general presentation of the topics of the research, the discussion started with general questions about perception regarding attitudes and intergenerational relations. The participants reacted in two steps. In a first step, they proposed, one after another, their interpretations, comments or examples. In a second step, a brainstorming session allowed to everyone to react about all the interpretations. The interpretations and discussions were tape-recorded.

In this methodological design, the researcher is not an expert but a *moderator*. His role is to make sure that the discussion rules are respected. The role of the observer is to take notes and to observe the group dynamics¹². Each report contains an extensive transcription of the different steps of interpretations.

1.2.3 Method for content analysis

The analysis aims at elaborating an explicative model taking into account the diversity of the interpretations and identifying as well the transversal role of some social factors throughout the diversity of situations, as the importance of specific or local issues. The analysis was inductive.

Practically, the analyst considers the interpretations one after another. He sorts them in order to clarify similarities and differences between individual’s interpretations progressively. In a comprehensive perspective, a structure is progressively built and confronted to new

11. *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

12. A theoretical hypothesis is that the nature of the relations in a group reflects the nature of the relations in society.

interpretations. The explicative model is “saturated” when each new interpretation does not provide any new information about the experiences and confirms the model without detailing it.

2. Patterns of relation to work: analyses of types

In this section, we proposed a categorisation that crosses two key variables: the attitude towards work, either pragmatic or subjective, and the nature of a life course, either standardised or individualised. Four types of relations to work are proposed: work as a constraint to experiment positively; work as a means to earn money; work as a support to self-development, and work as a cornerstone in the identity. This section explains the typology.

2.1 Definition of the typology

2.1.1 The type as a category for analysis

Due to the individual choices and circumstances, each collected life story is necessarily unique. However, it also refers to institutions, social values, social events and regular life steps. The interviews were considered as a moment of articulation between these singular and social components of the existence, in the perspective of a comparison.

Life stories are systematically compared to identify typical *life courses* and typical *attitudes* regarding work. To define the social pattern of relation to work and clarify the types of involvement in work, the different relations between those two dimensions are considered. The aim is to build a typology of involvement in work.

Typology is consubstantial to the sociological approach¹³. The “type” or the “ideal type” is a tool to understand social reality. “It has no more signification than being a notion, purely ideal, providing a reference to measure the reality and then to clarify the empirical content of some significant elements”¹⁴. For this reason, the ideal type is a “voluntary simplified picture of the reality, a guide for forthcoming investigations”¹⁵: it is “ideal” because it does not correspond to any reality.

However, the drawing up of the types must be rigorous. A typology is not a collection of descriptive categories: each type must be linked to the others throughout explicit disjunctions and the criteria that define these disjunctions must be explicit as well as the way they are correlate. At the final stage of comparison between types and empirical material, the researcher has also to elaborate new theoretical hypotheses aiming at explaining differences, common trends and transitions between types.

The two criteria that set up our typology are defined in the following sections: on the first hand, the concept of “life course”, the interest of that approach and the distinction between “standardised life course” and “individualised life course”; on the other hand, the two typical

13. Schnapper D., *La compréhension sociologique. Démarche de l'analyse typologique*, Puf, Paris, 1999.

14. Weber M., *Essais sur la théorie de la science*, Presses Pocket, Paris 1992.

15. Coenen-Huther J., “Le type idéal comme instrument de la recherche sociologique”, dans *Revue française de sociologie*, 44, 3, 2003, pp. 531-547.

attitudes regarding work identified in our analyses (pragmatic and reflexive) and the cultural model they illustrate.

2.1.3 Standardised life courses, individualised life courses

Life stories illustrate typical *life courses*¹⁶. A life course is an identified system of norms constructed by the society and proposed to the individuals like a way to organise their existence. It is a “social fact”, a “social institution”, and a “whole of rules that organises a key dimension of the living”¹⁷. In particular, it defines age roles and transitions associated to typical ages. Stefano Cavalli proposes the notion of “normative calendar”¹⁸.

However, despite the fact that circumstances and resources limit the individual, a life course approach cannot withdraw the existence of individual initiative. More precisely, there is no contradiction between social determinations (the existence of “normative calendars”) and individual autonomy (the desire to correspond or not to those norms). For Vincent de Gaulejac, “an individual cannot find his autonomy independently of his socio-historical context”. Indeed, the individual is “multi-determined, socially, unconsciously, biologically” and “those determinations lead to contradictions and to the necessity to make choices, to invent some mediations, to find responses”¹⁹.

The kind of response that an individual provides to solicitations of the cultural models determines the type of life course he is building.

If he wants to conform to the norms provided by a cultural model and if he has resources to do it, he engages himself in a *standardised life course*. Standardised life courses are the mainstream²⁰: institutions give social roles and positions; age is important; the position in the life course is a structuring dimension of the life, etc²¹.

If he does not conform to the normative calendar, he engages himself in an *individualised life course*. A distance to norms characterises those life courses, distance can mean incapacity to find resources or, at the opposite, a will for independence, the desire to build their own life project. Individuals negotiate their role, their position and their identity, which can be more precarious. Because institutions do not provide enough categories to organise the life components, dimensions of the existence are sometimes more confused, their articulation is more singular and they require more creativity or determination from individuals.

16. On this concept, we can refer to Guillaume, J.-F., Lalive d'Épinay, C., Thomsin, L., *Parcours de vie. Regards croisés sur la construction des biographies contemporaines*, Editions de l'Université de Liège, Liège, 2005.

17. Kohli M., “The world we forgot: a historical review of the life course” in Marshall V.W. (Ed.), *Later life: the social psychology of aging*, Sage, London, 1986.

18. Cavalli S., Fragnière J.-P. (Eds), *L'avenir. Attentes, projets, (dés)illusions, ouvertures*, Editions réalités sociales, Lausanne, 2003.

19. de Gaulejac V., *L'histoire en héritage. Roman familial et trajectoire sociale*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1999.

20. Kohli, M., *op. cit.*

21. Lalive d'Épinay C., “La construction des parcours de vie et de la vieillesse en Suisse au cours du Xxe siècle”, Heller, G. (Ed.), *Le poids des ans, une histoire de la vieillesse en Suisse Romande*, SHSR et Editions d'en-bas, Lausanne, 1994.

2.1.4 Pragmatic attitude, reflexive attitude

When they tell their life story, individuals refer to values, to social representations but also to a position they want to reach. In the interviews, individuals refer essentially to two normative bodies, two cultural models corresponding to two typical attitudes regarding work. An *attitude* is a way to grasp or to face social reality. It is a leading trend, which characterises our relation to the world, to the others and to some specific activities. The two identified types of attitude are present in our society. They are also linked to two historical forms of involvement in work²².

- The first attitude is *pragmatic* and a strong *relation to employment* dominates it. It corresponds to the idea that work is necessary to encounter some material and social obligations: family needs, consumption, organic solidarity, etc. Work is not life: it is just a mean. As it is a constraint, and because it takes a significant place in life, work must also be pleasant (this means working in a good atmosphere, feeling useful, having an interesting occupation...). Individuals referring to this attitude have interiorised a quite traditional conception of work (linked to the emergence of the Social State) and to a kind of participation in work existing until 1970's and rooted in stimulating progression and security of career: rationality of controls and evaluations assure social equity; career is a stable, steady and predictable progression for an individual is in the same organisation; progression means recognition of work and experience; etc.
- The second attitude is reflexive²³ and concerns mainly the relation to work. It corresponds to the idea that work plays an essential role in the identity. Individuals expressing this attitude have interiorised a second type of participation that promotes self-fulfilment, initiative, creativity, reactivity and flexibility. At the contrary, bureaucracy is seen as alienating the individuals. Individuals are engaged in a search for meaning²⁴ and the workplace is seen as a key place for this goal. This second kind of participation to work appears lately in the management literature of the 1990's (linked to the emergence of the Reflexive State²⁵).

2.2 Overview of the individual profiles and the typology

The comprehensive and comparative analysis of life stories allows identifying four types of relation to work. Those types are defined as individual responses to normative entities structuring the work field. The distribution of the profiles throughout the different types must be understood like the result of the diversity of the (primary and secondary) socialisation process and of the life's circumstances.

22. Boltanski L. et Chiapello E., *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, Gallimard, Paris, 1999.

23. Giddens A., *Les conséquences de la modernité*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1994.

24. Pauchant T. (Ed), *In Search of Meaning: Managing for the Health of Our Organizations, Our Communities, and the Natural World*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1995.

25. Cantelli F., *Pragmatique de l'action publique : État réflexif, subjectivité et délibération. Le cas de la prévention du VIH/sida en Belgique*, Thèse de doctorat, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2006.

Typology of patterns of relation to work - I

	Pragmatic involvement in work	Reflexive involvement in work
Standardised life course	Type I. Work is a constraint to experiment positively	Type III. Work supports self-development.
Individualised life course	Type II. Work is a means to earn money	Type 4. Work is a cornerstone of the identity

The following tables present the individual profiles corresponding to each kind of involvement in work. They are considered at the time of the interviews. However, a life course is obviously not static and individuals' participation to work can evolve in relation to opportunities, constraints and bifurcations. The last table presents the main characteristics of each type.

<u>PRAGMATIC INVOLVEMENT</u>							
<i>WORK IS A CONSTRAINT TO EXPERIMENT POSITIVELY</i>							
<u>STANDARDISED LIFE COURSE</u>		Age	Level of qualification	Nature of activity	Nature of contract	Marital status	Child
	Man 1	23	2	Worker in the logistic department of a commercial SME. Packaging of orders.	Temporary	Cohabit	-
	Woman 1	22	3	Nurse in the intensive care unit of a hospital.	Permanent	Living with parents	-
	Woman 2	28	3	Customer service assistant in commercial SME. Follow up of orders, claims, etc.	Permanent	Married	-
	Woman 3	29	2	Clerical worker in a local government. She is in charge of the accounts for small public works (follow up of orders, contact with suppliers, etc.)	Permanent	Cohabit	-
	Woman 4	28	3	Data processor, customer support engineer in a large multinational company.	Permanent	Married	-
	Woman 5	36	3	Team-manager of the receptionists in a hospital. Back to work after some years abroad.	Permanent	Married	2
	Man 2	36	3	Accountant in a hospital. Team manager of the supply unit. In charge of the encoding of invoices, payments, relations with suppliers and services managers.	Permanent	Cohabit	-
	Man 3	36	2	Clerical worker in a hospital. He is in charge of the dispatching of invoices to the clients.	Permanent	Married	2
	Man 4	44	1	Metalworker in a small steel company. He is in charge of the quality control of production.	Permanent	Married	3
	Man 5	50	1	Metalworker in a small steel company (assembly line). He is union representative. He works part-time to prepare his retirement.	Permanent	Married	2
	Man 6	52	1	Gardener for a local government.	Permanent	Married	2
	Woman 6	57	3	Clerical worker in a hospital. She is in charge of the management of legal documents. She entered late the labour market.	Permanent	Divorced	5
Woman 7	58	3	Clerical worker in a local government. She is in charge of the follow up of the public works. She came back to work after many years abroad.	Permanent	Divorced	1	

<u>PRAGMATIC INVOLVEMENT</u>							
<i>WORK IS A MEANS TO EARN MONEY</i>							
<u>INDIVIDUALISED LIFE COURSE</u>		Age	Level of qualification	Nature of activity	Nature of contract	Marital status	Child
	Man 7	19	1	Metalworker on an assembly line in a large steel industry.	Temporary	Living with parents	-
	Woman 8	43	3	Social worker in the local government. She is in charge of the coordination of a local project for facilities for small children.	Permanent	Married	2
	Man 8	50	2	Metalworker in a steel industry. He is in charge of the quality control of the production.	Permanent	Cohabit	-
	Man 9	63	3	Computer scientist. He is in charge of the quality control in a large IT company.	Permanent	Married	3

REFLEXIVE INVOLVMENT IN WORK							
<i>WORK SUPPORTS SELF-DEVELOPMENT</i>							
STANDARDISED LIFE COURSE		Age	Level of qualification	Nature of activity	Nature of contract	Marital status	Child
	Man 10	30	2	Team manager in a laboratory and union representative in a small steel company.	Permanent	Divorced/cohabit	1
	Woman 9	31	2	Web designer in a small multimedia company.	Permanent	Divorced	3
	Woman 10	33	3	Manager of the customer service in a commercial SME. She is supervisor of a rather young and female staff.	Permanent	Married	1
	Woman 11	34	3	Manager of the administrative unit in a hospital. She is supervisor of the administrative staff and she is responsible for the coordination with the medical department.	Permanent	Married	2
	Woman 12	38	3	Middle manager in the delivery unit of a commercial SME.	Permanent	Married	2
	Woman 13	38	3	Computer scientist. Manager of the training department of an IT company.	Permanent	Divorced/cohabit	3
	Man 11	40	2	Metalworker and union representative in a large steel industry.	Permanent	Married	2
	Man 12	51	1	Metalworker and union representative in a large steel industry. He produces marine engines.	Permanent	Married	2

REFLEXIVE INVOLVMENT IN WORK							
<i>WORK IS A CORNERSTONE IN THE IDENTITY</i>							
INDIVIDUALISED LIFE COURSE		Age	Level of qualification	Nature of activity	Nature of contract	Marital status	Child
	Man 13	26	3	Unemployed. Previously international sales manager in a small IT company.	Unemployed	Cohabit	1
	Man 14	28	3	Assistant manager in the delivery service of a commercial SME.	Permanent	Single	-
	Woman 14	29	3	Marketing assistant in a commercial SME. She is in charge of the commercial communication and the design of packaging.	Temporary	Cohabit	2+1?
	Woman 15	40	3	Computer scientist. Project manager with a team of 40 persons. International position.	Permanent	Single	-
	Man 15	47	1	Building worker in a local government. He is in charge of the maintenance of the public building.	Permanent	Married	2
	Woman 16	58	3	Human resources manager in a commercial SME.	Permanent	Divorced	2

<u>WORK IS A MEANS TO EARN MONEY</u>	<u>WORK IS A CONSTRAINT TO EXPERIMENT POSITIVELY</u>	<u>WORK SUPPORTS SELF-DEVELOPMENT</u>	<u>WORK IS A CORNERSTONE IN THE IDENTITY</u>
Which kind of involvement in work? Which expectations?			
Exclusively pragmatic. Work is necessary to encounter material needs.	Mainly pragmatic. However, it is also necessary to have a pleasant job.	Work is a way to discover personal capabilities and aptitudes.	Involvement in work is highly subjective. Success in life is subordinated to success in work.
Which kind of compromises between private and professional projects?			
Work is not life. Work is a mean to support personal and family projects. Those spheres are independent.	Professional and private trajectories are built together. However, the professional project is less important than the personal and family projects.	Professional project over-determines the personal and family projects. Work is life.	
Which relation to the instrumental dimension of work?			
Strong emphasis on the instrumental dimension of work. Working is a mean, not an end in itself. However, the priority is to have enough money or stability to cover individual or family needs. No ambition regarding salary or status.	Financial aspects in work are important but not determining. Stability is more important than salary or professional ambition.	Salary has a secondary importance. Stability is quite important to ease the realisation of family projects but is not essential (changes are possible).	Salary and status are determining in the assessment of the relation to work. Stability is of secondary importance.
Which relation to the social and symbolic dimensions of work?			
Social dimension of work is not a major concern.	The social dimension of the work is extremely important: working in a good atmosphere, in a supporting team.	Colleagues and managers provide recognition. Self-development is important.	Critical distance to authority or colleagues. Permanent search for excellence.
Counter-models?			
To be naïve and to consider his engagement in work with no critical distance.	To be a freelancer or working without limits in order to earn more money.	To have a job that does not correspond to his personality.	To work in a bureaucracy, to be a housewife.
Which kind of life course?			
Individualised life courses.	Standardised life courses.	Standardised life courses.	Individualised life courses.
Attitude in the career trajectory?			
Passivity. The most important in job is to provide money for material needs.	Quite passive. Changes are possible to find a more stable and pleasant job.	Proactive.	Very proactive. They are entrepreneurs of themselves.
Convergences / differences regarding to age, gender or level of qualification?			
No homogeneity. This type seems to be "residual".	This type is transversal to age. Many people already engaged in a private life (couple, children). Most of the low qualified are in this group.	This type is transversal to age, sector of activity and level of qualifications.	Part of young is important. Mainly qualified workers.
Main characteristics?			
Distance from work and low subjective involvement in the activity.	Search for pleasure and security at work.	Involvement in both professional and family projects.	Identification between life and work.

2.3 Relation to work and relation to employment

An additional important variable came out of the analysis of all profiles and the extensive characterisation of the four types of relation to work (see below in section 3): *the relation to employment*. Relation to work and relation to employment appear as different meaningful angles in the appraisal of attitudes and behaviours at work.

- *Relation to work* refers to the content of work, the management of social relations, the knowledge approach, ways of working, etc.
- *Relation to employment* concerns the position in the labour market, status, contract, career prospects; it is also embedded in trajectories.

It is important to point out this distinction because it seems that potential areas of tensions between generations are concerning the relation to employment rather than the relation to work. In the typology of relation to work that we have drawn, in two types (I and II), the relation to employment dominates the relation to work and in the two other types (III and IV) the relation to work dominates the relation to employment.

Typology of patterns of relation to work - II

	Pragmatic involvement in work		Reflexive involvement in work	
Standardised life course	Relation to employment dominates relation to work	I. Work is a constraint to experiment positively	III. Work supports self-development.	Relation to work dominates relation to employment
Individualised life course		II. Work is a means to earn money	IV. Work is a cornerstone of the identity	

3. Characterisation of four types of relation to work

The following pages provide an extensive presentation of each of the four types of involvement in work. Firstly, some of the profiles corresponding to the type are featured. Age, occupation and some significant elements of their life course are considered. Secondly, the core elements of the type are detailed. Recurrent characteristics of the life courses; general criteria of evaluation of work and classical dimensions of relation to work are successively developed and illustrated through quotations. Thirdly, a conclusion focuses on the vision of society as a whole that supports and legitimates the nature of involvement in work and social identity. In a generational perspective, some sociological factors enlighten on the one hand, the link between the life course and the involvement in work and on the other hand, the links with the other types of relation to work.

3.1 Main trends of the four types

A first approach of the sub-groups distributed into four types can be made through some basic analysis of data. Of course, this does not refer to any statistical data that would be nonsense according to the number of interviewees. However, a first glance at the distribution of interviews give a first idea of the global profile of a type in terms of individuals.

**Distribution of interviews within the four groups of the typology according to some variables
Number of interviews (percentages*)**

	Type I. Work is a constraint to experiment positively	Type II. Work is a means to earn money	Type III. Work supports self- development	Type IV. Work is a cornerstone of the identity
Total number of interviews	13 (42%)	4 (13%)	8 (26%)	6 (19%)
< 30	5 (56%)	1 (11%)	0 (-)	3 (33%)
Between 30 to 50	4 (29%)	1 (7%)	7 (50%)	2 (14%)
> 50	4 (50%)	2 (25%)	1 (12%)	1 (12%)
Man	6 (40%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)
Woman	7 (44%)	1 (6%)	5 (31%)	3 (19%)
Level of qualification 1 (low)	3 (50%)	1 (17%)	1 (17%)	1 (17%)
Level of qualification 2 (mid)	3 (43%)	1 (14%)	3 (43%)	0 (-)
Level of qualification 3 (high)	7 (39%)	2 (12%)	4 (22%)	5 (30%)

**Percentages are used to help the reader in his lecture of data; they have no statistical validity and usefulness. The total for lines is 100%*

We can see that the type that gathers a majority of interviews is the type I, with 13 cases upon 31 (42%), than we have the type III with 8 cases upon 31. Types I and III gather together around 7 cases upon 10. Type IV represents 1 interview upon 5 and type II is a more peripheral group with 4 interviews upon 31 (13%).

According to our sample of interviews, the following trends seem to be emerging: age and level of qualification seem more discriminating than gender; type I gathers more profiles below 30 and above 50 while the mid-age group is more represented in type III; the level of qualification seems higher in type IV while low level of qualification concentrates in type I. The detailed characterisation of types will develop these basic trends.

To have an idea of the importance of different issues for each type, and specific sub-groups (gender, age, qualification) we have calculated average numbers of pages in the transcription of the interviews. We can see, for example, if more time is spent to speak about the instrumental dimension of work in one or another group of the typology or in a particular age group. This does not constitute information on the content of the discourse but it is an indicator of the place of the specific dimensions of work in the discourses.

**Average number of pages concerning different dimensions of work
in an interview for each group in the typology and according to some other variables**

	Instrumental dimension of work	Social dimension of work	Symbolic dimension of work
Type I. Work is a constraint to experiment positively	1	2.1	1.7
Type II. Work is a means to earn money	3.6	2.4	1.5
Type III. Work supports self-development	1.7	3	2
Type IV. Work is a cornerstone of the identity	2.2	1.4	2.8
Man	1.9	1.5	1.8
Woman	1.4	2.8	1.9
Level of qualification 1 (low)	2.2	1.5	1.7
Level of qualification 2 (mid)	1.2	2	1.6
Level of qualification 3 (high)	1.6	2.3	2.1
< 30	2.1	1.9	1.7
Between 30 to 50	1.9	2.9	2.4
> 50	1	1.2	1.4

We can see that in type I (work a constraint to experiment positively), there is not any dimension emerging specifically in the prolixity of the discourse, the main issues seem to be the social and symbolic dimensions of work. In type II (work is a means to earn money), it is clear that the instrumental dimension is central. In type III (work supports self-development), a more important part of the discourse relates to the social dimension of work. In type IV (work is a cornerstone of the identity), the social dimension appears as less important while the symbolic dimension of work takes the largest place in the discourse about work. In the description below, we develop the meaning of these indicators.

The description of the four types of involvement in work is based on the current situation of interviewees. In the perspective of a trajectory, evolutions are possible (linked to age, family, life events, professional ruptures) and then *transitions between types may occur*. Specifically, types 2 & 1 and types 3 & 4 seem connected. They share the same pragmatic or reflexive attitude regarding work.

3.2 Work: a constraint to experiment positively

3.2.1 Short summaries of representative interviews

Woman 1, 22 years old, nurse in a hospital, permanent contract, full time, living with parents single, no children.

Woman 1 describes her biography as quite classical: classical secondary school and then entering in a curricula that was convergent with her desire to be in contact with children. She hesitated between being a nurse or a teacher. During her curricula as nurse, she had to do a traineeship in an intensive care unit. At first, she was not interested but finally she changed her mind and she found it extremely interesting. Consequently, she started a specialisation in intensive care (one additional year of school) and now she is working in that unit. She applied for a job in that unit specifically because she had a positive experience in that hospital and it was not too far from her house. She started working 4 months ago. She appreciates the atmosphere, the usefulness of her job, the relations with patients and their families. However, her main purpose in life is to start a family.

Man 1, 23 years old, worker in logistics in a commercial SME, temporary contract, full time, cohabits, no children.

Man 1 studied bakery but he is allergic to flour. Unemployed during a short period, he did not want to remain inactive. He contacted many temporary work agencies and he rapidly found very different jobs. He considered important to have a secure position to develop housing and familial projects. He is working now in the logistics department of a commercial SME. In his job, he mainly appreciates good social relations and the fact that this quite arduous job fits to his dynamic character. He plans to look for another job in order to remain in the same geographical area as his boyfriend. He is self-confident. As he is now more experienced, he thinks he will easily find another job.

Woman 2, 28 years old, clerical worker in a commercial SME, permanent contract, full time, no children.

After secretarial school, Woman 2 rapidly found a job in a commercial SME where she is currently working. Her previous job experiences were job student experiences. She appreciates to have a secure job in a “familial” structure. However, she would prefer to work as manager assistant than commercial assistant. She is ready to look for another job and to leave the company if that other job would be secure and support family project.

Woman 3, 29 years old, clerical worker in a local government, permanent contract, full time, cohabits, no children.

After secretarial school, Woman 3 found a first temporary job in a large company. She appreciated this first experience but, after two years, her contract was not renewed (it was a specific limited contract for young workers). Her father was a local politician. He helped her find a job in the local government. She has been working as a clerical worker for the municipality for four years now. In her job, she appreciates employment security, social contacts, diversity, proximity with home, etc. She is now ready to start a family with her boyfriend.

Man 2, 36 years old, accountant in a hospital, permanent contract, full time, married, no children.

Man 2 has a degree in accountancy. He discovered this professional area through a student job. He found it interesting and it was offering good job opportunities. Indeed, he rapidly got a first job (still the current job) in the account unit of a hospital nearby his house. He progressively got responsibilities in his job and became manager assistant. He has no career plan. He is not looking for a higher salary or for a position in hierarchy. He will only look for another job if he does not find anymore the quality of working life that he has in his current job.

Man 4, 44 years old, metalworker in a small steel company, permanent contract, full time, migrant (Italy), married, 2 children.

His parents arrived in Belgium during the '60. His father worked as a carpenter. Man 4 has six brothers and sisters. He is the oldest. Because his father had health problems, he left school and began to work at 16 to support his family. He was engaged in a small steel company where he is still working. He is resourceful and he appreciates (a relative) autonomy in work but not to take any risks. He works in the

quality unit of the company with a team he has known for 20 years. He plans to complete his career in the same company.

3.2.2 Core elements of the type

Those profiles correspond to quite *standardised life courses*, linear trajectory with no turning points, no particular life events, and soft transitions (from school to work)²⁶. Most of the individuals have a stable and standard family background. Some of them plan to start a family according to the same model. There is a connection between schooling and professional position. Individuals in this group have a clear, organised and trustful vision of their private future: having fun, next starting a family, having children, dealing with conciliation problems between work and private life.

This type is dominated by a *pragmatic* involvement in work. Work is not life but it is a necessary constraint to encounter material needs. Work is a means, not an end in itself. Family and work are separated, borders between those two spheres are clearly defined and priority is definitively given to private life. Therefore, the instrumental dimension of work (salary) is mentioned but it does not seem crucial in a professional choice. The priority is to reach stability and to have a reasonable income in order to ensure private security and needs. The definition of those needs can vary and soft bifurcations in a professional life course may occur, particularly if security is not guaranteed anymore. Individuals have a quite passive approach of their career. Career prospect is obviously secondary.

Having a “pleasant job” is another determining feature. Working is a constraint but they try to experiment it positively. Two definitions are provided to define it. They are often intertwined in the assessment of a job.

Firstly, a good job can mean *finding an interest in the content of the job*. They find an interest for the content of the job and a reasonable involvement in their activities. However, work does not seem to be a response to any existential or identity need. The symbolic dimension/position of the tasks performed does not matter, only the content matters. What is important in a job is: diversity, autonomy, accordance to personal interests, usefulness, etc.

If Woman 2 considers looking for another job, it is mainly because her current occupation does not correspond to what she would like to do. She wants to be a director assistant and she studied for that. As commercial assistant, she has not enough diversity and autonomy. However, this desire of change is balanced by the stability of her contract and the proximity to her house. Those elements are also essential for her. In addition, as she has a permanent contract, she is sure that she will find a better solution.

Secondly, a good job go always together with *enjoyable social relations* with colleagues and hierarchy; concretely it refers to: being member of a good team that provides support; working in a good atmosphere; having possible friendly relations outside work; etc. Some interviewees tell about a “familial atmosphere” at the workplace. The way of telling their job was also often collective; the narrative discourse uses collective form (we) rather than individual (I). Recognition of the hierarchy is also important. Recognition is perceived as the

26. Elder G.H., “The life course and human development”, in Lerner R.M. (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology. Volume 1: Theoretical models of human development*, New York, Wiley & Sons, 1998, pp.931-991.
Elder G.H., Kirkpatrick Johnson M., Crosnoe R., “The emergence and development of life course theory”, in Mortimer J.T., Shanahan M.J. (Eds), *Handbook of life course*, New York Kluwer, 2003, pp. 3-19.

confirmation of a position, not as an opportunity to be promoted; it is not part of a career prospect.

Thirdly, even if it is not a primary dimension, people in this group state *some symbolic expectations* regarding work: pride of their ability, performance, popularity, etc.

During the interview, Woman 1 regularly distinguishes herself from the other nurses and points out the differences between her unit and the other units in the hospital. She feels belonging to “the upper” class of nurses and presents herself as somebody who can stick to tasks when it is difficult, who is capable to overcome difficulties, to take on responsibilities and to be autonomous.

3.2.3 Relation to others and society

In this type, we have individuals with secured and strong identity. The environment provides security. However, work plays a secondary role in the construction of their social identity. Some have a strong collective belonging. The community model prevails. Most of the members of this group have a restricted vision of their environment: the working environment is the direct working group and the direct hierarchy.

The understanding of work and social identity is supported by a traditional vision of society and social roles. This vision belongs to the framework of a classical “organic solidarity”²⁷. Such a social cohesion is based on the interdependence of individuals. It refers to advanced modern societies with a high level of work division, in a social system characterised by an organic solidarity.

Individuals are linked one to another through an abstract link based on a social regulation of work. *Relation to employment* is the key factor of social inclusion: the social distribution of positions throughout employment provides sense and legitimacy to the personal involvement in work and ensures solidarity.

The coordination of the whole does not belong to individuals. Such a vision of the social sphere can explain the relative distance that most of the members of this group have with political issues, militancy and trade unionism. Very often in the interviews, these collective issues are described as “strange things”, “thingamajig” that seem far from close concerns. Beside the work sphere, the social area is the community to which the individual belongs: close relations, friends, colleagues and family members. Otherwise, the members of this group who are engaged in trade union activities often consider their role at a local scale and mainly in the angle of conflicts regulation. They do not consider their involvement at a wider social size. Sometime, involvement in trade union is also a kind of insurance against potential layoff.

The members of this group invest in the private and family spheres before anything else. The meaning of work is subordinated to these spheres. Career and social progress are not a major concern: the most important is firstly to have enough resources to *reproduce* his position in society. In work, expressive needs are encountered by the opportunities to have pleasure at work and recognition from peers and hierarchy. Family heritage and project are part of a work orientation.

27. Durkheim E., *The Division of Labor in Society*, The free Press, New York, 1933.

3.3 Work: a means to earn money

3.3.1 Short summaries of representative interviews

Man 7, 19 years old, steelworker on an assembly line, single, living with parents.

Man 7 considers himself a loafer. He loves mechanics but never had the courage to study. At 18, he decided to leave school to do an apprenticeship as coachbuilder. He had planned to have a diploma and to manage his own garage but then decided to abandon this project to work in a big steel industry. He is now working on the assembly line and he clearly does not like his job. For him, this is not a “real trade” because “everyone can do it”. However, he does not plan to change because it is a secure and well-paid job. He is living with his parents and he has quite reasonable financial needs. He has some regrets because he thinks that, with a diploma, he could have had a better position but, for now, he has no projects or career plan for the future. He thinks that he could be more enthusiastic the day he will start a family.

Woman 8, 43 years old, social worker in a local government, full time (temporary, plans to work part time), married, two children.

Woman 8 has a degree of social worker. She worked 7 years in an organisation for disabled people (part time). She appreciated this job. She was offered a position of manager in the organisation, which she accepted, but the position was very demanding (full time, high workload...). She was already mother of two children. Her husband was doing a PhD in agronomy and had to work for some time as researcher in Africa. This was the opportunity for her to leave her too demanding job and follow her husband with the children. Hard troubles in the country (Rwanda) forced them to come back to Belgium. It was a difficult period for the family (no more jobs for both of them and a hard disease for her husband – diabetic). She was not interested in getting a job. She felt better at home with her children. However, her husband asked her to look for a job for security reasons as he worried for his health. Therefore, she started working in her municipality with a temporary contract, which became a permanent contract. She has a limited interest for the content of work, the human environment or the income. She considers it mainly as a kind of insurance for the future.

Man 9, 63 years old, IT professional, permanent contract, union representative, migrant (Italy), married, three children.

Man 9 was born in Italy during the war. After the war, they came to Belgium. His family was not rich, however he considers that his youth was “not unhappy”. He had a classic schooling and became an engineer. He had always a strong personality and was a good student. His first job was for a medical firm. He did not appreciate that first experience so much and after 3 years, he moved to a second job in which he discovered informatics. This was really an exciting experience for him. He built valuable competences in an emerging sector. He started travelling, spending part of his working time abroad. He was happy in this job but, after 3 years, he applied in another company to get a higher salary. His wife was not active and a first child was born. He again changed jobs as he had the opportunity to work in a high-level and creative job in a major IT company. This work gave him a second opportunity to travel all around the world. Then he faced a problem with that company. Therefore, he anticipated difficulties and decided to join a trade union for “security” reasons. He also decided to look for another job (after 6 years in the company), which he found in another big company. He still works there today. Since those difficulties with his former employer, he has been involved in a trade union. He finds in this involvement a usefulness that he does not find anymore in his job. Despite the interest that one can find in a job, he thinks that the more important is to earn money. Moreover, he pretends that the more you are paid, the less your job is interesting. He has actually a strong distance towards work. There was never any blurring boundary between work and family, despite the demanding sector in which he was working.

3.3.2 Core elements of the type

In this group, the members are extremely various regarding the criteria considered in this research (age group, level of qualification, professional course, familial situation). They mirror *individualised life courses but also quite radical attitude* regarding work.

Firmly *pragmatic relation to the work* characterises this second type. Working is a means, not an end in itself, and what matters is to have enough money or security to encounter individual or family needs. Life outside work is more important than work (family, other interests, etc.). There are no blurring boundaries between work and family: work supports private life but is radically kept separated from it. The members of this group are opposed to overinvestment in work (they do not understand it) or to the subordination of private life to professional requirements. However, unlike the members of the first type, they have *no additional expressive needs regarding work*; working is *only* a means to earn money. This emphasis on the instrumental dimension dominates the relation to work. Only money seems to provide signification to work, work content and social relations are not determining.

Man 9 had a regular statutory progression during his career. He even knew a short period of real passion for the content of his work. Passion in job came from the feeling of being part of the progress, doing research, working in a creative environment and new scientific areas. However, he decided to move to another company for financial reasons (looking for a better paid job). He considers that he always “worked for money and for nothing more”.

Social dimension of work is explicitly not a major concern: to have a pleasant job or to work in a good atmosphere is an “accident”, not an expected condition. People in this group are even quite critical regarding their colleagues or their hierarchy. There is a polite lack of concern between colleagues.

“[My superior] said it clearly: ‘do not disturb us and do not ask for more money or we will stop everything. We had the opportunity to have some finance to hire someone, to please to someone without having to meet the expenses’. It was clearly said just like that: it is not really motivating” (Woman 8)

3.3.3 Relation to others and society

Individuals belonging to this type share, with individuals belonging to the first type, a common attitude regarding work, supported by the same general conception of organic solidarity.

However, throughout their involvement in work, they state a quite “*disenchanted*” vision of work, society and solidarity. They have no (more) passion for work, no emotional involvement, neither for successes nor for problematical events. They have interiorised the obligation to work but this “activity” is not considered as playing a significant role in their social identity. The relation to employment is an effective but senseless reference, limited to this instrumental transaction. Individuals work for themselves, according to their own needs, without considering any global solidarity standpoint²⁸. They keep away from social concerns and organisational life.

At the same time, interviewees belonging to this type are significantly more critical regarding to social sphere. Some of them have a chilly lucidity regarding the rules of the labour market or the local political sphere. Some others seem to extend their personal experience to the whole society.

Man 7 does not understand the policy of retention of older workers at work: “older workers must free their place for younger ones”; Woman 8 considers that politics is only a game for wheeler-dealer; Man

28. Two interviewees belonging to this group are union representatives and their involvement is limited to local issues.

9 is opposed to all discourses about precariousness than create an environment of fears and support the submission of workers.

Beyond the diversity of profiles, some common aspects in the individual life courses may explain such radical approach of the pragmatic attitude. Those elements lead to consider those profiles as “marginalised” regarding work and social frameworks²⁹.

Issued from a modest family, Man 9 became a highly qualified expert in the IT sector but he is now relegated to a senseless job; despite the fact that his sisters have a valuable university degree Man 7 leaved school, became unskilled worker and do not face his choice; Woman 8 did not plan to work but she had to find a job because of her husband's health problems; etc.

They do not “reproduce” social positions; they rather have ascendant or descendent trajectories. They have not fulfilled a life project. Work is not meaningful. They find little recognition in work (personal and from others). Therefore, their strong values and certitudes, their autonomy regarding rules and their critical approach of work-life appear as a reaction to their current situation and their singular life course.

3.4 Work: a support for self-development

3.4.1 Short summaries of representative interviews

Man 10, 30 years old, metalworker in the steel industry, permanent contract, full time, divorced - cohabit, one child.

Man 10 has had 14 temporary contracts during several years and in very different areas. During this period, he also started an independent activity (selling insurance policies) but failed. He considers that all those diverse professional experiences were good for him and he never considered being in a precarious situation because he was never unemployed. He has now a permanent contract in a steel company. He considers that training is important, particularly on-the-job training (closer to reality than school). He has a diploma in industrial electricity. In his job, he pays attention to the quality of the social relations and to the fact that the job has to encounter his expressive needs (he didn't want to be a “flunkey”). He has a child and is divorced. He looks after his child halftime. He has chosen a less paid work schedule (no shifts) but more stable in order to have a good balance between private and professional life. He is now responsible for a team in a laboratory. He is also union representative.

Woman 10, 33 years old, administrative manager in a commercial SME, married, two children.

Woman 10 has a basic training as a teacher (for children from 3 to 6 years old). She worked as a teacher for two years but she had no permanent contract. She started learning marketing (to broaden her opportunities) and decided to change her career orientation, but without specific career plan. She had the opportunity to work for a public company but she finally chose to work in a commercial SME (closer to her house). She is now administrative manager in this SME. She intends to stay as long as she remains interested by her job. She is married and she has two children and has an efficient organisation to manage both familial and professional requirements.

Woman 11, 34 years old, executive in a hospital, permanent contract, full time, married, 2 children.

She achieved a master in economy with a strong interest for the non-profit sector and employment issues. She worked in a para-academic research centre for two years but she rapidly stated that this was not her future. She found a job as an economist in the research department of a mutual insurance company. Her company moved to another location and some of her colleagues left because of the increased distance from home to work. Woman 11 also quitted this job when one of her ex-colleagues suggested she should apply for a job in a hospital (where this ex-colleague had in the meantime been working). She started as

29. For R. Castel, marginal groups are identified through their exclusion “from the network supporting wealth and social recognition”. Castel R., “Les marginaux dans l'histoire”, in Paugam S., *L'exclusion. L'état des savoirs*, La Découverte, Paris, 1996, pp. 32-41.

an assistant of the direction but was sometimes feeling over-qualified for some tasks. During this period, she had a second child, so she decided to work part-time (4/5) and so did her husband. When the administrative manager left the hospital, she was offered the position. She accepted the challenge. “To know something, it is necessary to try.” Woman 11 developed the needed skills and now feels competent for the job. Since six month now, she is working full time as administrative manager and her husband 1/2 time. As regards the future, she has no precise plan. On the one hand, she hopes to keep the same job, at least 5 or 6 years or maybe for a longer term. On the other hand, she feels family will always be her priority and she is open to any radical decision if it concerns the wellbeing of her family. She also considers other orientations. For example, she has always been interested by research activities in the area of criminal investigation in the police.

Woman 12, 37 years old, logistic manager in a commercial SME, permanent contract, full time, married, two children.

Woman 12 studied communication at the university. It was her second choice after she failed to achieve studies in law. She rapidly had a job in a NGO in the social and healthcare area. She appreciated this job but she was fired because of a restructuring. She decided to start a training course in marketing to add a commercial dimension to her CV. She worked in a textile company but left the company: she felt she did not have enough autonomy and recognition from her management. She started in the commercial SME as manager assistant in the logistic department. When the former manager left the company, she was asked to take this position and she accepted. However, even if she is doing the same work as her former manager, she does not have the title of “manager” nor the salary (she is senior supervisor).

Man 11, 40 years old, worker in a steel industry, permanent contract, full time, union representative, migrant (Italy), married, two children.

At school age, he was interested by woodwork but he finally followed his friends in the plumbing section. He has no regrets. He considers that it was not easy to find a job in the plumbing area. He directly looked for a job in large companies. He rapidly found a low qualified job in a chocolate factory. He worked two years in this factory but he decided to look for another job, because he had no permanent contract and because the factory planned to move quite far from his home. He started working in a steel company (the same company as his father). He got married one year later. Six years later, the factory went bankrupt. Therefore, he went back to the chocolate factory, where he worked for 4 months. He did not feel well there: too clean, too controlled, too framed, too individualistic, and too “feminine”... When his former company started anew to recruit, he immediately decided to apply for a new job, even if it was less paid and in less profitable conditions. He became union representative and he is now working fulltime for the union within the company. He highly appreciates being in a supporting and friendly group. He identifies himself with the traditional “steelworker”; it is part of his identity.

Man 12, 50 years old, qualified worker in a steel industry, union representative, permanent contract, full time, migrant (Italy), married, two children.

Man 12’s parents came from Italy during the fifties. He belongs to a large family (5 children), rather poor. He was passionate by mechanics but not by school. His child’s dream was to have his own garage and to work as a mechanic. Despite the resistance of his father, Man 12 left school. He started working in a bolting company. He was also moonlighting in a garage. He moved rapidly to a major steel company: more modern, with higher salaries (30% higher) and training opportunities. He had hoped to work in the mechanic department and he was quite disappointed when he first had to work in other areas. As he was a good recruit, he was quite soon selected to follow a specific training to use digitally controlled machines. During this period, Man 12 faced reorganisation and managerial innovations (teamwork). He had the opportunity to move in the company and choose to go in an area closer to mechanics. He had to work 4 years on an assembly line. Then he was again selected, together with another colleague, to produce marine engines: he had finally the opportunity to realise part of his dream “working as a mechanic.” It also meant giving up the ‘whole picture’ of his dream (start up his own garage). Deciding to stay in the company indeed came along with meeting his future wife. Getting married, starting a family changes everything. The priorities were no longer the same. They became: security, housing, buying consumer goods, buying a car, and having children. In the beginning of the ‘90, he was asked by colleagues to be a union representative. Since the ‘90, he is specialised on safety issues. He is also passionate about his trade union activities and he does not hesitate to make overtime at home for this.

3.4.2 Core elements of the type

People in this type have rather *standardised life courses*, with stable family backgrounds: standard trajectory from school to work, from family to independent living; no turning points, no particular life events; easy transition from school to work; easy transition from one job to another; no fear for the future, no question (life is predictable), etc. The group is mainly composed of people at the mid age of their life and work trajectories. Even if the younger ones have known different job experiences before finding a satisfying job, they have now started a family and they have a significant professional background and a job matching their wishes. However, they remain proactive in the management of their career and, more generally, in the management of their life. They are ready for changes, for new experiences.

Their involvement in work is characterised, on the first hand, by *the importance of the subjective dimensions of work*. Work is not a constraint; it is a way to discover personal capabilities and aptitudes, a support for self-development. However, on the other hand, the subjective involvement in work is *balanced by the importance given to family life*. Individuals corresponding to this profile do not consider work and life separately. Even if most of these individuals clearly state that the professional project is less important than the personal and family projects, professional and private trajectories are built together.

Their involvement in work reflects this tension and their effort to solve it. One of the most important factors in their job assessment is that it has to be reasonably manageable with family life. The practical aspects of a job (distance from home, required overtime, unsocial hours) are key factors in personal choices as regards work. In the same vision, a job must offer a reasonable stability and a sufficient salary to cover personal and family needs. Starting a family requires reasonable choices for the security and well being of the family (whatever can be your dream work).

However, to have “a good job” does not mean to have “the best-paid job”: salary is clearly of secondary importance. Moreover, stability is a condition to allow the realisation of current family projects (because children are young) but is not crucial in the long term.

The importance of *self-development dominates their work assessment*. Specifically, they all benefit from a status (manager, team manager) and/or a commitment in a trade union (union representative) that allows distinguishing themselves from the other workers. They consider the content of work and professional challenges as opportunities for discovering their own capabilities. Bifurcations in the trajectories are explained by the wish to find a job that fits their interests/personality and that provides recognition.

“I discover everyday that I have enough intern coherence (...) to follow lines of conduct which came quite spontaneously. I was unsecured, six month ago, but now I am not feeling worried anymore. I think that this is something important I have acquired for the future” (Woman 11).

In work, individuals consider positively autonomy, flexibility, targets..., but they all know they have to be efficient and useful to feel legitimate in their position. They cannot undertake a meaningless activity. The positions they hold now in the organisation are often proposals coming from the hierarchy or colleagues. They have no professional strategy, no career plan. Higher positions are above all opportunities to discover their potential and capabilities.

“To learn and to be useful for the company remains essential for me. (...) I need to feel that I am at the right place... that I am the right person at the right place. (...) It is linked to my need for recognition. It is link to the question of the self-assurance” (Woman 12).

Regarding the social dimension of work, they have a “professional” attitude regarding work: to have fun in work is important but time for fun and time for work must be distinguished. Recognition in work goes hand in hand with effort in work. Therefore, throughout social relations at work they are mainly looking for recognition and support.

Such attitude could mean a strong identification with the company or the occupational group but without giving up private life.

After the bankruptcy of his previous organisation, Man 11 started working in a chocolate factory (his girlfriend was already working in this factory). He leaved this “female environment” and started working in a steel industry in which his father was working for years. This was a “man work”.

The members of this group value working with competent colleagues, high-level team, demanding managers, etc. Autonomy and trust are also important. They do not appreciate excessive control or constraints. They also consider that some collective margins in work organisation are necessary for good social relations.

3.4.3 Relation to others and society

Individuals belonging to this type have an organised vision of society as well as a clear – and “realistic” – vision of life stages and a clear distribution of roles and places in different spheres (work, family...) and times (for dream, for work, for pleasure, for responsibilities...). Throughout their *relation to work*, they reach social positions and opportunities but, at the same time, they are aware that they have duties; they have to be efficient. For example, having a higher salary or other advantages requires additional effort, as a return.

Their conception of society and solidarity is based on a balance between “rights and duties”. They are aware of their individual responsibilities in the social regulation but they actually feature another version of the organic solidarity in which sense and the outside cannot provide security of existence. This “subjectivation of work”³⁰ – as well as the intrinsic tension between work and private life – is, more generally, a consequence of deep economic changes that are reshaping work and social frameworks. Through their experience, they had to balance a wide range of opportunities and the requirement to make key choices. Most of them had to face insecurity or unemployment in their life course (directly or not) and to build their professional and life courses on their own.

Individuals socialised in such context become “entrepreneurs of themselves”³¹: they act according to rules and roles but they play an active role in the design of their trajectory; they look for occupations or positions that allow/support personal involvement and responsibility;

30. Subjectivation of work is the “intensification of the subjective involvement in work and the mobilisation, in the productive effort, of relational aptitudes normally valorised outside the worksphere”. Périlleux T., “La subjectivation du travail”, in *Déviance et société*, vol. 27, n° 3, 2003, pp. 243-255. The subjectivisation of work is deeply related to new forms of work ethics. Subjectivity has always been involved in professional work. What seems to be new is the intensified use of personal “qualities”, the request for immediate gratification, and the ideological justifications underlying the whole process. Zoll R. *Nouvel individualisme et solidarité quotidienne*, Kimé, Paris, 1992.

31. According to R. Castel, to become an “entrepreneur of the self” requires a continuous work, based on the practical experience of the efficient properties defining the social positions. The career plan is a product of this complexity and illustrates the ability of the individual in shaping his life course. Castel R., *L’insécurité sociale, Qu’est-ce qu’être protégé*, Seuil, Paris, 2003. See also, in the management literature: Aubay B., *L’entreprise de soi*, Flammarion, Paris, 2000.

they find at the workplace references to build their professional and social identity (occupational group, responsibilities...); etc. Moreover, they manage their professional life course as well as their private life. For example, if individuals succeed in managing the conciliation between work and family, this equilibrium is always the result of both an individual and familial construction.

However, combining work and family is hard, such equilibrium is always precarious, and they have to face the risk of overinvestment, not only in work but also in life itself. Time is really a key issue; they live continuously in a rush.

Example: In combining a demanding job and a family, Woman 11 has reached a “physical” border. She is extremely tired and has some health problems but she thinks that it is a transitory period. If it is not the case, she will take a decision in the interest of her family.

When you arrive at school in the morning, there are always mothers who talk hours and hours with the teacher. Me, I have no time for that! I drop my boy, I look forward during two minutes then I have to go... When I sometimes pick him up at 3:00 PM, I say for myself “who are all those people who do not work?”. It is not possible, I don't understand...” (Woman 10)

3.5 Work: a cornerstone in the identity

3.5.1 Short summaries of representative interviews

Man 13, 26 years old, IT professional, migrant (Latin America), unemployed since short, married, one child.

He came to Belgium when he was very young because of troubles in his country. Back in Latin America, he started a small IT company with his brother. He also started studies of engineer at the university. When the company collapsed, he stopped his study and came to Belgium. To survive, he first worked (in black) in security services and as IT support for an Embassy. When he got in a regular situation from administrative point of view, he directly found a job in a small IT company. He worked very hard, gained rapidly responsibilities and higher income. He became sales manager responsible for a large geographical area. He also restarted studies, through an Open University. He got a degree in management and is now completing a master. After some years (3), he got frustrated because his progression was not as important as he had expected. Therefore, he developed a negative attitude towards his bosses (avoiding discussions, always seeming irritated, expressing his disappointment through diverse ‘politically correct’ means). He was fired. Man 13 is still interested in starting a new company; whatever can be the domain of affairs. He has always kept, even when he was salaried, some activities as self-employed in the area of IT support and services. Being unemployed is not seen as a problem. On the contrary, with the support of the Belgian social security system, he has some months to try to build a new company. After this deadline, he will look for a salaried job if it is necessary.

Man 14, 28 years old, manager assistant in a commercial SME, permanent contract, full time, cohabit, no children.

Man 14 encountered some difficulties to complete schooling. He had the intention to study in a famous British management school, but gave up his project. He came back to Belgium to study communication but he had to do two years over. Having free time, he worked as a student in a model agency. He appreciated to work in this luxurious sector (he represented Armani, Alfa Romeo...) but he considered it as a first experience, not as a career project. After that, he worked in the public relations area for an artist agency. He appreciated this job but he was fired because of company restructuring. Thanks to a temporary work agency, he started working in a commercial SME. It is a completely different job: he is manager assistant in the logistic department. However, he appreciates this job. The company is “cool”, young, dynamic and the environment is supportive, even if he finds it too “provincial”. It is important for him to have opportunities of self-development. He wants to follow a specific training course in human resource management.

Woman 14, 29 years old, marketing assistant in a commercial SME, temporary contract, full time, married, two children.

After a first unsuccessful year in agronomic studies, Woman 14 decided to study marketing. To pay her studies and accommodation, she had student jobs. She discovered that she was efficient in sale activities. She had a first professional experience she considers as negative. She left the company because of restructuring. Then she worked for a short period for a student magazine. She left again the company because she did not agree with the management of this organisation. She worked as freelancer in advertising companies after that. Then, she had a first child and had a “sabbatical year” (she was already taking care of the two children of her husband). She sometimes worked for her husband’s company when he was abroad for professional reasons. Two years ago, she started working for a bank and after that for an important pharmaceutical company. She wanted to be promoted in the management team but she had not enough relevant experience. Then she decided to leave the company to get this marketing experience in another company. Her aim is to come back in the pharmaceutical company and get a better position. She is now marketing assistant.

Woman 16, 58 years old, human resource manager in a SME company, permanent contract, full time, divorced, one child.

Woman 16 early wanted to be independent from her parents. She refused to be a housewife as her mother and wanted to be “free”. After secretarial school, she rapidly found a job in a lawyer organisation. She appreciated this job because it offered many opportunities to learn in a good atmosphere. She gets married and has a daughter. After a deep reorganisation of the practice, she worked in an embassy during seven years. Political changes forced her to find a new job. She decided to build up a company with a friend of her (in the clothing industry) but they failed. She considers she was not aware enough of business realities. However, she feels important to have tried. After that, she worked in a small company during again seven years (importation of flowers) but the company went bankrupt. She entered a newborn company and has been working there for 22 years now. This company has known an important development and has become the European pole of a multinational company. She has progressively gone up the steps and she is now human resource manager.

3.5.2 Core elements of the type

Those profiles illustrate *individualised life course* characterised by: chaotic familial story; atypical curriculum; and irregular trajectory with turning points, hard transitions and other particular life events (migration, divorce/marriage of parents, strong changes in schooling orientations, professional failures...). Significantly, they provide little information on parents, family or colleagues. They have also an individualised vision of the future, still open to diverse scenarios, but no fears; they are quite confident regarding their future. They build their own path and do not follow precise steps.

Example: Man 13 studied when he was working. Highly qualified, he is unemployed but has already a child, plans to build a house, next, will organise a party and, next, get married before having another child.

Schooling as such is of secondary importance in their path, but if required it can be important: a social status requires diplomas but also resourcefulness. To achieve their own goals, they play their own rules and take some distance with standard social and collective rules. For example, a young interviewee confesses without difficulty that he regularly moonlights to have more money and a useful experience, whatever can be the jobs regarding his level of qualification.

Salary, rewards and status are determining in the assessment of their relation to work. At the opposite, at the current stage of their professional trajectory, stability is clearly of secondary importance. In particular, the youngest interviewees consider that they are in a transitional period in their life course. They are not opposite to some stability in work but therefore they

must be sure that the job they find is the best job for them, the one that can encounter their high expressive needs (autonomy, responsibility, money, prestige...).

“If the company proposes me a job which corresponds to my ambitions, to my aspirations... Salary will not be the determining element. However, it will come at the second place. It will play a role in my decision but my personal aspirations and my self development comes in the first place” (Man 14).

Their subjective involvement in work is high but, at the same time, they consider it from an individual perspective. When they talk about their work path, their job or their projects, they are generally silent about colleagues. Social relations are peripheral (even if it is assessed as a positive criterion) and they prefer to make “their own business”. Autonomy in work is a key dimension in work. They have a permanent critical attitude regarding authority and hierarchy; they can consider it as a barrier to their own project and progress. They continuously negotiate their salary, their position, their responsibilities... and they do not avoid conflicts. They cannot wait and the management must follow their requests.

To have such a discussion (about salaries) with his bosses is not easy. Usually, they say: ‘you are not ready yet, you have to prove more’... After three or four attempts, you become disturbing... to the point of being fired! It was the conclusion for me. I saw they didn’t want to pay me more, that they didn’t make any effort... and my motivation decreased...” (Man 13).

3.5.3 Relation to others and society

The involvement in work of the individuals in this group is highly subjective and supports their personal identity. Position in work determines success in life. They are confident that *a strong and subjective relation to work* is the best way (if not the only) to be successful in a career and an existence.

People in this group consider society as a structure of opportunities but also as a battlefield for privileged positions. In such a competing environment, permanent search for *excellence*³² and transcending one’s own capabilities is essential. As outsiders, they are demanding for themselves and ready to do all what is required to be successful (following new trainings, working 20 hours a day, illegal work...). They are looking for a job allowing flexibility, providing challenges and requiring personal involvement and creativity.

“When you acquire some experience, the financial issue becomes an important issue... in particular when you’ve started at a very low level... when you are behind and that you want to catch up this delay” (Man 13).

Professional project dominates the personal and family projects. In other words, *work is life*. Among others, the specific tensions and boundaries observed in the previous type between work and family are not an issue. Of course, women have to make compromises regarding to their family constraints but they consider them as non-problematical. Life is a whole driven by a strong relation to work, not a combination of spheres.

32. Peters T., Waterman R., *In search of excellence. Lessons from Americas’s best-run companies*, Grand Central Publishing, New York, 1988. This book became a reference in the management literature. The authors propose to consider a new way of managing people based on their high subjective involvement. See also the French critical analyses of: Aubert N., de Gaulejac V., *Le coût de l’excellence*, Seuil, Paris, 1991 ; Ehrenberg A., *Le culte de la performance*, Calmann-Levy, Paris, 1991. These authors propose a critical analyse of the management of excellence and demonstrate some of its limits and psychological consequences (particularly: burnout).

“It’s only a question of organisation. When people ask me ‘How do you do with three children?’, I say ‘But, wait, it’s like a job, a second occupation, that’s all. Just a question of organisation’. If you are organised, it works!” (Woman 14)

On the other hand, their involvement in work reflects a strongly individualised project: their “fight for positions” is a personal effort³³. If they consider that work must provide a just return to personal efforts (no matter ages, positions or levels of qualification), they do not balance the opportunities with other specific social responsibilities.

This attitude could then be understood as the outcome of a tension between a subjective project and a current social position (not satisfying):

To be a migrant who wants to become a top manager (Man 13); to be a young mother who refuses to be a housewife (Woman 14); to have failed in studies and to want to be over the top (Man 14); to be a low qualified worker who is entrepreneur-in-heart (Man 15); to be a woman in the 1970’s who wants to have a career (Woman 16).

4. Intergenerational relations

In this section, we focus on all what has been said about generations at work by all interviewees and in the group discussions. We identify the key issues that came up from the interviewees, as well as the convergences and divergences regarding these issues. We look at the articulations between visions of generations at work and particular types of relation to work (as described in the former section). The final question is to see if there are potential areas of tensions between generations and, if so, which are these areas.

4.1 What means generations at work for all age groups?

Generations at work and intergenerational relations are the key issues of the SPReW project, so all the interviewees have been asked to talk about generations at work through open questions, in a narrative way.

A first statement that emerges from the answers is that the discourse about generations at work can be more or less prolix regarding some criteria. As an indicator, we have calculated the average numbers of pages in the transcriptions of the interviews according to some criteria. However, while doing so, we have not yet any information on the perception of age groups but we have a flavour of the place of the issue in a whole set of preoccupations. The average number of pages is the higher for people above 50, for people in type 2 of categories (section 3.2 *work as a means to earn money*), for men and for the first level of qualification.

33. “The fight for positions is not a fight between individuals or social classes. It is a fight of solitary individuals to find a position, which means a status, an identity, recognition and social existence”. de Gaulejac V., Taboada-Léonetti I., *La lutte des places*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1994.

**Average number of pages concerning generations at work
in an interview according to some criteria**

Under 30	1.5	Men	3.3
Between 30 and 50	1.6	Women	1.2
Above 50	4.4		
Level of qualification 1 (low)	4	Type I. Work, a constraint to experiment positively	2
Level of qualification 2 (mid)	2.1	Type II. Work, a means to earn money	5.5
Level of qualification 3 (high)	1.8	Type III. Work, a support for self-development	2.1
		Type IV. Work, a cornerstone in the identity	1.5

What is also interesting to notice is that talking about generations often concerns the edges of the age groups, as if there was no intermediary generation, everybody being either young or old (with no clear demarcation of age between young and old). Young workers talk about old workers and old workers talk about young workers. This is also about young workers that interviewees (> 30) are more prolix. Interestingly, however, it is in the mid age group that we notice the more controversial appraisals of age groups.

Going through all the interviewees, we see five common issues emerging regarding generations at work, with different standpoints. Some others issues that were supposed did not come up in the discourses. The five common issues that come up are:

- *attitude*, starting often with the topic of motivation;
- *modernisation*³⁴, with ICT as catalyser of all changes occurred in work in the past decades;
- *trajectories*, with a huge diversity in trajectories according to age (education, schooling, entry routes in employment, working conditions);
- *human relations*, through the expectations regarding atmosphere at work, social relations, informal relations, solidarity, social bond;
- *knowledge and ways of working*, with appraisal of ways of working, knowledge transmission issue, changes in occupations.

Some issues do not come up in the interviews.

A first one is related to *authority and hierarchy*. This does not seem to be an issue linked to generations, for any age group. The informants have not raised the existence of a tacit age hierarchy. Authority and control could have been suspected to be an area of tensions between

34. Modernisation refers to all changes that occurred in work during the last twenty years, not only in the area of technological development but also in work organisation, management of human resources, globalisation, enterprises restructuring, etc.

young workers and older workers – the first ones having a different vision of the management and the second one holding the hierarchical positions – however this has not been raised as a key issue. In some cases, the age hierarchy (regarding authority and control) was reversed, with young workers being supervisors of older workers, but even in these cases considerations regarding age or generation did not come out of the interviews. Power distribution in work organisation, distribution of role regarding control and authority was not discussed in relation to age.

Age in itself is a second issue that has not been raised in the interviews. The definition of age groups is extremely confused: who is young? Who is old? Are there age demarcations? For some interviewees, age is associated to seniority; for others, young workers are trainees, those who do not yet belong to the regular staff. The perceptions of ages are extremely subjective and it is difficult to draw a standard picture, commonly accepted, of what are age groups/generations at work. A common appreciation could be summarised through some quotations: “This is not age that matter, this is work.” “Age is a wrong variable, there is always something else.” “Differences of age... I have no problem with that.”

We develop below the content of the five common issues that came out of the interviews. We point out the divergences and convergences regarding these issues between age groups. Most of these differences are not creating tensions between age groups at work. *We will see that potential areas of tensions between generations are not related to work but rather to employment.* This point will be developed later.

4.1.1 Attitudes regarding work and employment

Regarding attitude, one must notice that comments in this field are more frequent in the two age groups above 30. Young workers are less prolix on this issue. They have less comments and judgements about the attitudes of older workers. It seems that in the area of attitude at work, the young generation appears different from the others. The key word when talking about attitude is *motivation* for work. Young workers are suspected of lacking of motivation, initiatives and enthusiasm for their work. Their interest for the instrumental dimension of work is described as dominant.

Considerations about the level of motivation of the young generation is developed around two axes:

- the first one is dealing with cultural changes (education, comfort of social policies, changing values);
- the second one has to do with the psychological contract between enterprises and employees. Young workers have to live with short-term contracts and insecurity and they have to draw themselves their professional trajectory. Consequently, they do not have the same loyalty towards their employer; older workers interpret this as a deficit of motivation.

In the first set of arguments explaining this feeling of changing attitude towards work, some interviewees explain that the young generation does not want to go working. From the point of view of older workers, life is too easy. Young people have not learnt motivation from their parents. They do not know why they have to work. They feel well with the employment benefit.

The difference for me is that I had to work. The difference is that for them (young workers), “one needs to work”. “One has to be in the working world”. I was obliged to work to help my parents. For them it’s only because they have to work. That’s life, it is like that, one has to work as well. (Man 4)

Well...that’s what makes life, the system works like that nowadays... It’s too easy, everything is a godsend...take a young guy, he’s not married and he wants his own house, he wants a fully equipped kitchen, a car...they want everything easily. They have another way of thinking, even at work; they have another way of thinking. (Man 5)

In this set of arguments, we also find some references to changes in key values. The young generation has another relation to leisure; that has an effect on its availability to work. The relation to family is also different now. When both men and women are working, the availability for work is no longer the same. Older workers were the main breadwinners; it was important for them to catch all the opportunities to earn money, this is no longer the case for young workers with active partners.

See the young, they don’t have that preoccupation. They work their 8 hours and then they like to stay at home. They like their friends. They visit friends. They go and have a drink with them. Don’t ask for more of them. Whereas for me, if there are two doors to be placed, well I’ll go and place the two doors. And I’ll see my friends afterwards...Yes, well, that’s it. The young don’t have the same...it’s not in their standards of behaviour. It’s not in youth’s way of life. (Man 5)

The second set of arguments that explain this appraisal of the level of motivation of the young generation is the rupture in the psychological contract with the enterprise. If young workers seem less motivated by their work, it is due to the enterprise that does not give them any chance or perspective. Young workers are driven by fear; they feel endangered by mass unemployment.

They have another mentality, yes yes, they have another mentality...You ask them to work an extra hour, they refuse, they want to go home. They are not motivated. Then again, they are not motivated, but I understand them. They are waiting for a permanent contract...they wait; they wait, and finally don’t get it. That’s what discourages them. And then, you have to explain them everything, but it’s normal because there is a lack of experience and everything that goes with it. (Man 5)

However, if there is some dominant tacit agreement concerning those arguments, the reversed opinion is also present: older workers are described as more blasé than younger workers, more indifferent to work, not concerned anymore, while young workers are described as more motivated or as “new blood for the organisation.”

Both sets of arguments developed around the issue of “motivation” are deeply linked to trajectories. Young workers are different because their trajectories are different (this will be developed further in section 4.1.3).

According to Flamant³⁵, thirty years ago the discourse was the same. The same kind of “commonplace” was said about young workers entering into work. There has always been some gap between generations. What happens now is that enterprises are rediscovering a young generation while during twenty years young workers were either kept outside the enterprise or were a silent workforce managed with the fear of unemployment. The young generation reflects all what has changed in the outside world (consumption, precariousness, technologies...) and they bring these changes within the enterprises that are now more

35. Flamant N., *Les jeunes, les seniors et l’entreprise - Faux débats, vraies questions*, Etude Entreprise & Personnel, Paris, 2005.

massively confronted to these changes throughout these young workers. Trustworthiness has to be reconstructed between young workers and enterprises.

4.1.2 ICT as figurehead of modernisation

There is a common agreement regarding capabilities of young and old workers in the field of ICT. Young workers see themselves, and they are described by older workers, as more competent in ICT, while older workers see themselves, and they are described by young workers, as less competent and quite reluctant to ICT.

I have worked with older people in the beginning...very pettifogging...what age is “older people”?...50 [...] My mother is a teacher, imagine, her desk is full of paper. I don't even have a hundredth of that, isn't it amazing? No really...nowadays, there is a less paper everywhere ...a less paper...no need to make little drawings to understand each other, things like that...on the other hand, they (the older ones) are maybe more...better than us at project concretisation in meetings. Maybe we stay too much behind our computers, we are just at 5 meters from each other and say “hey what do you think of this?”. Why? Because we don't see each other anymore. I noticed, I have colleagues right in front of me, and it's very rare we speak to each other. Everyone has his ipod in the ears and we send each other emails...it's sad, it's sad. (Woman 14)

It is interesting to notice that only two age groups raised the issue of ICT: below 30 and above 50. It did not come out the interviews in the mid age group. This has to be linked to the curve of diffusion and adoption of ICT these last twenty years.

Differentiate aptitudes regarding new technologies is often the first element that appears when questions are asked about generations. Older workers (above 50) are the last generation who spent a significant part of his working life without being confronted to ICT. They had not been trained to that when they were young and this was not part of their private environment. They had to learn it starting from scratch, also when user-friendliness of devices was at a poor level and when ICT were suspected to be responsible of redundancies in many industries and large administrations. ICT were part of a landscape characterised by an increased level of unemployment and mass redundancies. For the younger generation, ICT are part of their daily life. They start their familiarisation trough leisure and ICT are quite natural tool when they start working later. They are quite experts in multiple forms of technology. They learn to deal with ICT as the older generation was learning to ride a bicycle. “They play videogames, visit chat rooms, keep in touch with friends through instant messaging, mobile phones, and internet sites such as FaceBook, use the internet (rather than the library) as a resource for doing school work, watch TV, take pictures with digital cameras or cell phones, and frequent multi-user virtual environments on the web.”³⁶

ICT are for the older generation the symbol of all major changes that occurred in work this last twenty years: changes in organisational models with the emergence of the network enterprise, outsourcing, development of services, automation of informational tasks, codification of tasks, polyvalence, flexibility... ICT are, in a sense, the figurehead of twenty years of mutations even if their determining role can be discussed (this is another debate). ICT at work are the daily concretisation of the shift from an industrial society to an information society, from a communitarian enterprise to an open enterprise.

36. Meyers A. R., “Millenials workers: communication issues between the generations” paper presented for the GfA Conference in Kassel in September 2007, to be published.

A conclusion of this vision regarding ICT is that being old is to be stuck to his epoch and to be reluctant to changes. It is saying no to the new economic world. We can suggest that the divergences that may occur regarding the capabilities in the field of ICT are an opposition between two eras of capitalism and two contexts of work that have radically changed.

4.1.3 The mark of trajectories

There are ambivalent discourses regarding trajectories. Changes are evident; life/work trajectories of older workers are quite different from those of young workers today. Both are pointing out the differences. However, mainly the older workers group draw out the differences in trajectories of the different age groups. They have ambivalent statements: on the one hand, life is described as easier for young workers but on the other hand, they describe their employment status (not their work in itself) as extremely problematical and unfair as regards what they have known when they entered the labour market more than 30 years ago. Differences are noticed at all stages of the trajectory: education, schooling, entering into work, starting a family, working conditions...

Starting from education, things have obviously changed. Older workers state that the relation to work of parents acts as a model. Their parents were working hard. The parents of young workers today had easier working conditions, so it is normal that they did not pass on a model of hard worker.

We had our parents... The parents, they worked down the mine, they worked hard and learned from it. And they passed on this experience. Nowadays, the youth, it's different. It's different. Why? If I compare how my father worked and how I work now, it's much easier now. It's much easier now, working conditions have changed. Advantages have changed, one has more than previously. I remember, I went to school walking. Today, a young man who goes to school does it by car. Even without working, he has a car. Thanks to his parents. (Man 5)

Twenty years ago, a young man would have put up with it, he would have said: "well no, I'm attached to my job. Tomorrow, it may be another job but today, I'll do everything I can." (Man 8)

Older workers also point out that young workers have no experience of work when they start working; young workers arrive in the enterprise after school with no experience of work. They are not confronted anymore to demands in the private sphere that were first experiences of work.

Time spent in schooling and the place of school are very different. Older workers have the impression that many young spend too much time at school without projects. Moreover, they have no experience when they arrive on the labour market. With nowadays paths of integration into work, they only have a useful experience at 30 and they only start thinking to an independent living and a family at 30.

However, the shift to a knowledge society makes training and schooling increasingly important, both with experience. Work organisation has now to be supported by individual aptitudes to deal with complexity³⁷.

37. Brunel V., Cultiaux J., "Le développement de l'individu managérial", *Actes du XIII^e congrès de l'association internationale des psychologues du travail et de la formation*, Presses universitaires de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2002.

Living conditions have drastically changed and this has to do with the differentiations of attitudes towards work. When older workers started working, it was necessary to work for living, for eating, now it is no longer the case (point of view of older workers).

However, a common issue is the precariousness of young workers that older workers have not known. Work insecurity³⁸ is often pointed out as a significant change in the work framework. When they refer to their insertion, the older workers point out that it was easy to have a career, whatever could be the level of education or qualification. Today, they observe the current loss of prestige of the diplomas, the political regulations that delay the insertion of the youth, the flexibilisation of work... The entry routes to work appear as more individualised and hazardous. Individuals build their career lonely in acquiring several years' experience in multiple – and sometimes very diverse – jobs³⁹ before finding a secure place.

Older workers say that their working conditions were harder; however, this statement concerns work, not employment. From this point of view, older workers say “we would not like to be a young worker now.” “It is not fun what young workers have to face.” “Enterprises are excessive with young workers.” In the steel industry, older workers were quite prolix on this issue.

Before, we had 15 days of trial and then we had a permanent contract. Now, they work but they have temporary contracts. There are many precarious contracts in the company [...]. The younger ones would like to have a permanent contract but they cannot. Some of them have a temporary contract since 10 years. It was not the same for us... But they have no choice. (Man 5)

Some times ago, the company had the time to train the newcomer. Now, he must be ready after only three days! If he has no experience of the work, he will be obviously fired... I understand that the younger workers entering a company are timorous. They don't know where they are going to and for how many time... (Man 8)

Today, there are 50% of temporary contracts on the assembly line. The other 50% are older workers. However, to work with digitally controlled machine tools requires two or three years of training, in some specific cases. If the worker is not ready after six month, he is fired. In the other case, they have secure contracts. (Man 12)

Some of the older workers declare that it is normal if young workers are less loyal; that cannot remain stuck to old models. Management and enterprises have a huge responsibility, they divide groups. In addition, management disseminate stereotypes about ages in enterprise. Concerning insecurity of work, it appears as a cynic management tool, aiming at testing, retaining, motivating the new entrants in the labour market.

Now, bosses who say “well, we want to be able to hire you and then get rid of you”, well I think it's normal that people respond by saying “a company, we (as workers) have a right to hire and get rid of you as well”. I think it's absolutely normal and even very healthy as well. (man 9)

Managers nowadays, they manipulate them (young workers). It causes tensions, jealousy, competition. The boss says “do as he does and you'll have a contract”. They dangle the prospect of a contract, but at the end young workers don't have the contract. They work with interim or fixed-term contracts. If they go and look elsewhere for a job, it's the same. That's how it goes today. In the company, it's all permanent contracts, but also a whole set of interim contracts, fixed-term contracts...and these are mostly those of young people. (Man 5)

38. As the sample is composed of individuals having a job, insecurity is mainly evoked as the difficulty to keep a job.

39. One of the interviewees had 14 jobs before finding a secure job in a steel industry.

My personal impression is that the young workers are fearful. They are influenced by discourses that make the situation even darker. I have the impression that several ones coordinate that [...] they repeat too much that there are no job opportunities anymore. This is not true: it is propaganda. [...] Let's be honest, if I was the boss, I'd do the same, I'd lead individuals to believe that there are no other possibilities than staying and working hard. (Man 9)

Yes, the company is secure. For me, to say the contrary is a strategy based on rumour. The goal is to make the people more conscientious, to motivate them, to avoid too long breaks... However, it depends. This does not necessarily motivate them... Sometimes, they are managed with fear. (Man 4).

The young workers – particularly the low qualified – are described as the main victims of this situation (they have to start a family, to pay a mortgage for their house, etc). However, the older workers mainly use the word precariousness. When they tell their situation, the young workers tend to relativise the issue. They often consider those different experiences as trials that legitimate their current occupation. They have a negative appraisal of such transitory period when they fear to be trapped in it. For those who are more qualified it is also part of a “battle for talents.”⁴⁰

I had 14 jobs before this one [...] I had only temporary contracts. I was young and it was one week here, one week there. It was nice, indeed: I worked a short time in every sector [...] A job is a job; it's always a professional experience. (Man 10)

I think that, today, a young worker who wants to have a secure contract must be aware that it doesn't come easily. He must recognise that he had to work for a temporary work agency during maybe six months or more... But one and an half year, no, it is not possible [...] I do not want to work for a temporary work agency anymore. It only provides money for a week, maybe two. It's not possible when you have to pay a mortgage for an apartment, for a house or for a car [...] I have gain enough experience to avoid that, now. (Man 1)

This issue of trajectories is important. On the one hand, differences are rooted in this context, and on the other hand, trajectories are not neutral. If transition or precariousness is too long, it is difficult to reinvent a trajectory after 30, and even before. Chauvel⁴¹ qualifies this as an hysteretic effect of transitional socialisation: past history matters in an individual trajectory and former experiences have an impact on further steps. According to this author, there is a scarring effect on generations, in which past difficulties for generational groups left marks that will not disappear spontaneously.

In the framework of a large study about generations at work in the French railways, Flamant⁴² develops the same conclusion. The trajectories of young workers entering the enterprise have an impact on their relation to work, their specific expectations regarding the enterprise and the management. In a research on changing relations to work, trajectories are a key element that distinguishes age groups but also individuals within age groups. In his study, Flamant differentiates four sub-groups among young workers, according to common trajectories: the post-schooling; the former trainees; the post-precarious; the second professional route.

40. Michaels E., Handfield-Jones H., Axelrod B., *The war for talent*, Harvard Business School Press, Harvard, 2001.

41. Chauvel L., “Les nouvelles générations devant la panne prolongée de l'ascenseur social”, internet reference, <http://louis.chauvel.free.fr/ofceralentissementgenerationnel5.pdf>, (visited 7.11.2007)

42. Famant N., 2005, *op cit.*

4.1.4 The importance of human relations

Quality of social relations at work is an important dimension for all age groups and age does not appear as a barrier to good social relations. Generally, mixing generations is considered as something positive for organisations.

According to young workers, homogenous age groups look better regarding informal relations. Age does not matter when the purpose is to work together; however, in informal discussions, age is visible.

With guys of my age, it's a bit more pleasant regarding atmosphere...we have more fun...maybe we are a little less strict... if we go on a business trip, we'll go out more...have a drink somewhere... have fun...it's a different relation...it's a little bit different, yes... (Man 13)

The difference of age is more perceptive in their conversations...they speak about problems they have with their teenagers and youth...while we actually are that old...so, sometimes we feel concerned by their sayings, but from the other side. (Woman 1)

Common interest is something that supports a good atmosphere and creates harmony within staff. A manager (mid age group) explains that she would not introduce older workers in her young staff because the motivation of the young workers for the company is strongly associated to the good atmosphere. It is a kind of compensation for poor status (mainly temporary contracts and low salaries).

I organised a feed-back not so long ago, a human valuation 15 days ago, where I questioned them about all kinds of things, and all that came out of that was "we're not paid enough, we don't have a great salary but we wouldn't go and look for something else because we like it here, because we have a certain freedom, because the team is nice", so you see. It was really the general outcome. (Woman 10)

In the steel industry, older workers put forward a paternalist attitude regarding new entrants in the enterprise.

I was the "youngy", the kid of the team... They were all around the fifties, I was the kid of the department, so I was really welcome. That's why I say I wouldn't want to leave this branch, because I've always been warmly welcomed, in the divisions I worked in, because, well, it's true that I was 22 years old, I was a kid, you know. So therefore, it's good, I really liked that. It was really nice. (man 10)

An important issue, most often raised by older workers, is the opposition between individualism and solidarity. The impression is that the world of work is becoming more individualist and that solidarity is declining, for different reasons linked to individuals but also to society as a whole. However, such statement is extremely ambiguous because while saying so, people also put forwards a story demonstrating that social link at work is not disappearing.

Mutual aid and cooperation in work are still alive and not linked to age. For example, in a steel company, older workers went on strike for a problem concerning a young worker. As all young workers had precarious status, they were caught out, so the older generation, with secure status, took the initiative to support the case of this young worker.

Complains about solidarity are more complains about the meeting between two conceptions of enterprise. Age groups are associated to different conceptions of organisations. Most of trajectories of older workers have been in communitarian enterprises while young workers are

entering into the labour market with the conception of the open organisation, a model promoted in discourses, at school, in the media, at the policy level.

We had a certain way of working previously and then these ones arrived, young, full of will. Well the others, the former ones, were attached to their established privileges, they were saying: it's us. And it became a generation conflict [...] Even if the people who started at the new company [created after bankruptcy of the old one] were more competent than those working at the former one, it was always those of the older one that had the last word. Because this thing was still remaining...whereas the others, those that came afterwards, are more individualists. [...] They don't have this feeling of good fellowship that we still have. Because there are still lots of former workers of the former company who work here. And after ten years, they still don't understand why the others don't have this way of thinking. But it doesn't come like that, if one doesn't know it, one can't acquire it. Some people understand it: they have not been accustomed to it. But others don't understand, so they are perceived as unpleasant. Even before knowing who they are, they are unpleasant. Because they don't think like them, they are unpleasant. (Man 11)

The question of individualisation is not only a matter of work; it is a trend concerning society as a whole. However, in this field, we have different approaches, some pessimistic that concluded with a disappearing of solidarity and a huge decline of social bond at work. Generally, young workers are seen as the flagship of this situation. Other approaches are less pessimistic. They analyse current situations marked by individualisation in terms of changes rather than in terms of destruction. The key hypothesis is that the social bond, solidarity and collective consciousness in the work field are not disappearing, but that the forms and temporalities of the social bond within work are changing. They are closer to a logic of network, organised around projects, with individual involvements, than to the logic of community that is at the core of the trade union institution and the traditional approaches of the social bond in the work field. An approach of the social bond through the paradigm of the individual-subject can help to understand how social life is evolving in the work field⁴³.

4.1.5 Knowledge and ways of working

A last important issue that came up in the interviewees concerns differentiated ways of working and knowledge.

In daily working life, older workers are described as more structured, more logic, more organised, less “hyper”, more serene. They bring their wisdom in daily work. All these attitudes are the outcome of experience. Young workers are described (by young workers too) as excited, chatty, impulsive.

It's most certainly the less 'speeded' and self-possessed side of older people, they have their story, their life, wisdom, wisdom of age, experience and they will in fact give this tranquillity or this calmness [...] If I had to change today, I would be happy if they wouldn't be only young people. And thus not having to be the only 'senior' side of things, but also to have connections and discussions, because one certainly learns from young people but we do have to learn from seniors as well. (Woman 12)

We may have different working methods...I think an older worker will be more structured, more organised, having a certain logic...but it's something you gain from experience...I am, on the contrary, rather impulsive and...like, I will do something and I won't really care about the administrative side of things. (Man 13)

43. Vendramin P., *Le travail au singulier - Le lien social à l'épreuve de l'individualisation*, Académia Bruylant (Louvain-la-Neuve) - L'Harmattan (Paris) Collection “Sciences & enjeux”, 2004.

Young ones are more tense, talk a lot, pull their hair out...but the older ones actually accomplish the same amount of work. (Woman 14)

Regarding effectiveness, older workers are not considered as less efficient. Efficiency comes with time and experience. Inefficiency of older workers is a myth (said by a young executive woman).

They may be old dinosaurs, they may seem to crawl along a little when they walk, but you may not forget they have 30 years of experience, if not 35. And they know the system well, they know it's no good getting worked up. (Woman 14)

Knowledge capital and knowledge transfer are key issues. There are different standpoints on those issues. Some young workers (in IT sector) said that they have to take the initiative to question older workers otherwise they will not come spontaneously. For others, exchange of knowledge is natural; it comes naturally through cooperation.

Sometimes dialogue is difficult...if you're not behind them and don't ask questions, it won't come spontaneously from them...from their desire to transfer competences or knowledge... You have to say: "Listen, I have this case. What do you think of it? How would you handle it?", and so on. So...it's true that in most cases, now that I think of it, I'm always the one that goes towards them...and it's rarely the case counter wise. (man 13)

Everyone keeps a little, you don't give everything. It's a bit stupid, isn't it. When he'll leave because we had restructurings, we had people leaving on early retirement, all the know-how and so on, well everything left with them. Everybody keeps to oneself. One doesn't give. But if you get along well, then there is no problem. Trust is not something that comes easily. (man 11)

Some interviewees notice that transmission of knowledge is not only a matter of age. You have to learn when you are a newcomer in an enterprise and it is not always young workers.

If experience belongs to older workers, methods are also changing. Young workers seem to be more at the forefront regarding new methods of work, than it is up to them to exchange their knowledge with other age groups. Knowledge transmission comes from both sides of the age spectrum.

Some older workers explain that current work rhythms do not leave rooms for knowledge transfer. Young workers have to be resourceful, they have to learn by themselves and if they succeed in it, they will gain a permanent contract otherwise they will be fired. Moreover, an older worker said that they have nothing to teach them because they are hired for peripheral tasks. Young workers have learnt at school and when they enter the labour market, they only have poor offers from temporary work agencies. They are constrained to accept poor jobs otherwise, the temporary work agencies will not offer them any jobs. They are constrained in a way to accept all these peripheral jobs because they are always waiting for a permanent contract.

4.2 Visions of generations at work and types of relation to work

In the preceding section, we have developed five topics that came up in the interviews, we have pointed out the different positions regarding these topics and the sense of some statements. These five topics concerning generations are:

- *attitude*, starting often with the topic of motivation;
- *modernisation*, with ICT as catalyser of all changes occurred in work in the past decades;
- *trajectories*, with a huge diversity in trajectories according to age (education, schooling, entry routes in employment, working conditions);
- *human relations*, through the expectations regarding atmosphere at work, social relations, informal relations, solidarity;
- *knowledge and ways of working*, with appraisal of ways of working, knowledge transmission issue, changes in occupations.

In sections 2 and 3, we have developed four patterns of relation to work in a typology; the four types are:

- Type I - Work: a constraint to experiment positively
- Type II - Work: a means to earn money
- Type III - Work: a support for self-development
- Type IV - Work: a cornerstone in the identity

We are now looking at the interconnections between those two analytical approaches: the patterns of relation to work and the visions of generation. One main question behind this cross-analysis is to understand if specific patterns of relation to work are associated to specific visions of generations. Another key question is to identify if there are specific areas of tensions between generations according to types of relation to work.

4.2.1 Main issues raised in each type of relation to work

In the type I (work: a constraint to experiment positively), the relation to work is mainly pragmatic. However, a job has also to be pleasant. The instrumental dimension in type I is important but not determining. Stability is more important than salary or professional ambition. However, the social dimension of work is extremely important. This refers to working in a good atmosphere, in a supporting team. People in this group are quite passive profiles; changes are possible to find a more stable and pleasant job. The expectations regarding work are: pleasure and security.

In this group, the discourse regarding generations focuses on human relations and attitudes, which are important points for these profiles. Security of employment can be a problematical issue. Knowledge, ways of working or the issue of modernisation through the topic of ICT are not discussed in a generational perspective.

The relation to work in type II (work: a means to earn money) is exclusively pragmatic. Work is necessary to encounter material needs. There is a strong emphasis on the instrumental

dimension of work. Working is a means, not an end in itself. However, the priority is to have enough money or stability to cover individual or family needs. There is no ambition regarding salary or status. In this group, the social dimension of work is not a major concern. Those profiles are also quite passive regarding their working situation. The most important in job is to provide money for material needs. We find a distance from work and a low subjective involvement in the activity.

The main topics regarding generations concern security of employment and potential concurrence between age groups regarding employment status. There is no competition around work, but around employment. The issue of modernisation is raised in the discourse about generations; it can create demarcations (not meaning oppositions) between age groups.

For people in type III (work: a support for self-development), work is a way to discover personal capabilities and aptitudes. The instrumental dimension of work is of secondary importance. Stability is quite important to ease the realisation of family projects but is not essential (changes are possible). Colleagues and managers provide recognition. Self-development is important. These are more proactive profiles. Their involvement is high both in professional and family projects.

In this group, discourses on generations focus more on knowledge and ways of working and on human relations too. Attitude is not a controversial issue. Employment is not an area of tensions; there is no competition between ages regarding status in employment and security.

For workers in type IV (work: a cornerstone in the identity), involvement in work is highly subjective. Success in life is subordinated to success in work. Salary and status are determining in the assessment of the relation to work. Stability is of secondary importance. There is a critical distance to authority or colleagues and a permanent search for excellence. Those profiles are very proactive. There is identification between life and work.

In this group, human relations are not an issue in the discourse concerning generations and security in employment is not a competing area for age groups. Attitudes and ways of working have more importance in the vision of other generations.

The perspective of trajectories is mainly a standpoint developed by older workers to explain their understanding of the current situations of each group in work. Young workers do not have such understanding in terms of trajectories when they point out differences between older and young workers.

4.2.2 Relation to work and/or relation to employment

We have developed above the content of the five common issues that came out of the interviews. We have pointed out the divergences and convergences regarding these issues between age groups. We have looked at the correlations between the relation to work and the vision of generations at work. Most of these differences that we have seen are not creating tensions between age groups at work. They do not appear as possible battlefields. *The potential areas of tensions between generations are not related to work but rather to employment.*

There are obvious areas where differences are concrete between age groups: visions of the enterprise (communitarian versus open); ways of developing social bond; aptitudes with ICT

and the approach of communication shaped by these tools; informal interests. However, stating these differences is not pointing out potential sources of tensions between generations.

The discourse of one generation regarding another is more controversial when employment is at stake (not work). The age group with the more controversial discourse about generations is the mid age group, perhaps those who feel more threatened by concurrence in work. In interviews, they refer to a cost analysis telling that enterprise will prefer “low cost workers” and as cost is correlated with age, they fear to become too “high cost workers” and to be dismissed and young workers preferred. Young workers make statements regarding differentiations between age groups on different issues however their discourse is rarely controversial.

Consequently, this is in the types in which the relation to employment dominates the relation to work that tensions may possibly occur (type I and II, pragmatic involvement in work, see table below). For example, interviews belonging to type II were the more prolix regarding generational issues. We have pieces of discourses about the exit of work of older workers that can make stable jobs available for younger workers. One young worker said that it was up to the government to take decisions in order to allow older workers to exit the labour market through pre-retirement schemes. This can create stable jobs for young workers.

Typology of patterns of relation to work - II

	Pragmatic involvement in work		Reflexive involvement in work	
Standardised life course	Relation to employment dominates relation to work	I. Work is a constraint to experiment positively	III. Work supports self-development.	Relation to work dominates relation to employment
Individualised life course		II. Work is a means to earn money	IV. Work is a cornerstone of the identity	

4.2.3 Age groups are not homogenous

One important dimension must be raised out at the end of the analysis: age groups are not homogeneous groups regarding their relation to work and generations. It is important to point this out because, notably for young workers, they are often considered as a whole group sharing the same attitude regarding work.

We remind the distribution of interviews among types of relation to work. The type that gathers a majority of interviews is the type I (work as a constraint to experiment positively), with 13 cases upon 31 (42%), than we have the type III (work as a support to self-development) with 8 cases upon 31. Types I and III gather together around 7 interviews upon 10. Type IV (work as a cornerstone in the identity) represents 1 interview upon 5 and type II (work as a means to earn money) is a more peripheral group with 4 interviews upon 31 (13%).

A first statement is that all ages are distributed in the four types, however with some differences. For the group of young workers (below 30), we have no interview in the type III. Most of the young workers are in type I (55%); the second important group for them is the

type IV (33%). For the second age group (between 30 to 50), the main type is the type III (50%). This age group is dominating in this type. They are characterised by the wish and the difficulties to combine a career prospect and a family project. The older generation (above 50) is also well represented in the type I (half of the interviews in this age group) and type II is the second sub-group for this age category, as if a long career would lead to some distance towards work.

Age does not determine as such a specific relation to work. As already mentioned, this later is marked by trajectories. Because the diversification of trajectories is higher in the young generation, this effect of trajectories is perhaps more visible in the young generation.

An interesting thesis⁴⁴ published in Canada also demonstrates the heterogeneity of the young generation regarding the meaning of work. However, in this research the sample of interviewees were both students and workers. In a typology, the author suggests six types of relation to work for the young generations (see table below). These types are convergent with the typology proposed in this report. The main trends that cross all these types are: the expressive dimension and the wish of a more balanced life. In the conclusion, this study also states the role of trajectories in the shaping of a relation to work.

Typology of patterns of relation to work for young generations

Relation to work	Meanings of work	Centrality of work			Importance of:		
		Identification to work	Relation work/outside work	Life pattern	Work content	Working conditions	Human relations at work
1. Utilitarian	Means to earn one's living	Low	Low convergence	Outside work oriented	Low	High	Low
2. Solidarian	Source of sociability (affectivity place)	Low	High convergence	Work oriented	Low	Low	High
3. Careerist	Means to get a status (mobility place)	High	High convergence	Work oriented	More or less important	High	High
4. Expressive Moderate	Source of self-actualisation	Low	Low convergence	Balance between work/outside work oriented	High	High	High
5. Expressive Integrated	Source of self-fulfilment	High but not exclusive	High convergence	Balance between work/outside work oriented	High	High	High
6. Passionate	Source of self-fulfilment and surpassing of oneself	High	High convergence	Work oriented	High	More or less important	High

Source: Ancil M, *Les nouvelles générations et le sens du travail. Des jeunes en quête d'expressivité au travail et d'un plus grand équilibre dans la vie*, Thèses de l'Université de Laval, <http://www.theses.ulaval.ca/2006/23823/23823.html> visited the 20.11.2007)

44. Ancil M, *Les nouvelles générations et le sens du travail. Des jeunes en quête d'expressivité au travail et d'un plus grand équilibre dans la vie*, Thèses de l'Université de Laval, <http://www.theses.ulaval.ca/2006/23823/23823.html> (visited the 20.11.2007)

Type 1 in the typology above is close to the type II (work is a means to earn money) of the typology developed in this report. Type 2 is closer to type I (work is a constraint to experiment positively). Types 4 and 5 are close to type III (work supports self-development) and finally types 3 and 6 show convergence with the type IV (work is a cornerstone of the identity). Definitely, age as such does not determine a specific relation to work. Age is crossing all types developed.

Flamant⁴⁵, already quoted, distinguishes also four categories of young workers according to their trajectories. Each one raises different challenges in the field of integration strategies within enterprises and human management. He differentiates the young workers according to their trajectory, their expectations regarding work and the nature of their relation to work. The four categories suggested are:

- *The post-school workers*, those who have just left school. In enterprise, they expect professional learning and development of competences. They have a rather distant relation to work and are open to external mobility. They are in a learning trajectory.
- *The ex-trainees*, who finish a traineeship. They wait for a valorisation and recognition of their competences. They have a corporatist involvement and a strong professional identity. They are in a reproduction scheme.
- *The post-precarious*, who had a precarious trajectory with unstable jobs. They expect a social and professional stability. They have a weak professional identity. They want some rest and are not open to mobility.
- *The second professional trajectories*, those who are moving from one employer to another but in a more secure way than the third group. Their mobility is voluntary. They have a professional project and a relative professional maturity. They are characterised by their innovation capacity.

In our analysis, trajectories are also considered as a key point in the shaping of a relation to work. The first fundamental distinction between standardised life course and individualised life course goes in this way. Within these two basic categories, we find differentiated trajectories that mark individuals. This focus on life course and trajectories explains why no patterns of relation to work and visions of generations can match to one specific age group.

4.2.4 Main gender differentiations

Gender was a permanent variable going through all the analysis. As a first conclusion, we can state that there is no fundamental differentiation between men and women regarding the relation to work or the generational perspective. Gender is not a dominant variable in this field. However, some differences can be put forwards. The following tables provide indicators to the statements established at the end of the analysis.

45. Flamant N., 2005, *op. cit.*

Distribution of interviews within the four groups of the typology according to gender - Number of interviews (percentages*)

	Type I. Work is a constraint to experiment positively	Type II. Work is a means to earn money	Type III. Work supports self-development	Type IV. Work is a cornerstone of the identity
Men	6 (40%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)
Women	7 (44%)	1 (6%)	5 (31%)	3 (19%)

*Percentages are used to help the reader in his lecture of data; they have no statistical validity and usefulness. The total for lines is 100%

Average number of pages concerning different dimensions of work and generation in an interview according to gender

	Instrumental dimension of work	Social dimension of work	Symbolic dimension of work	Generation issue
Men	1.9	1.5	1.8	3.3
Women	1.4	2.8	1.9	1.2

Men and women are quite equally distributed between types I and IV; the differences are between types II and III. Women are less numerous in type II, in which work is mainly assessed according to its instrumental value; however they are more represented in type III, where work is a support to self-development. This is in line with the time spent in the interviews by men and women on different issues: women are more prolix than men on the social dimension of work. Women would be more demanding regarding the meaning of work.

The issues of time management and conciliation are definitively a discriminating variable between men and women. *Time is obviously a female issue*, very important in type III (work as a support for self-development). Some women seem to be tugged between types III and IV, between their family project and constraints and their wish to have a career.

Regarding generational issues, men are more prolix than women are. However, on this issue, there can be a sectoral effect: in the steel industry, we have only men, their views are not gender balanced. In the other sectors (health, commercial SME, public administration, IT sector), both men and women were represented in a comparable way.

5. Intermediate conclusions

Different social contexts have shaped generations of workers and their social environment, in particular their families. They had to face specific tensions and to solve specific problems and finally they developed new types of attitudes towards work. Particularly, job insecurity is often seen as one of the most significant changes that influence social cohesion. Full employment that supported the trajectories of Baby Boomers is over since a long time and the

destandardisation of work contributes to reshape professional life courses: entry routes to work, training paths, careers, mobility, etc⁴⁶.

The diversification of life courses is an outcome of the diversity of responses that individual and familial strategies provided. Such diversification has an effect on the definition of professional courses (objective impact) and the way they are experienced (subjective impact). Those variations can be explained by the dynamics enlightened in the previous sections and they are linked to specific issues at different steps in a life-course. Moreover, common objective situations in work lead to different experiences. To tackle this complexity, we have also to take into account the variety of subjective involvement. Crossing two key variables — the attitude towards work (pragmatic or reflexive) and the nature of the life course (standardised or individualised life courses)— appears as a fruitful perspective to understand individuals' involvement in work and intergenerational relations. A distinction between the relation to work and the relation to employment appears also as a key variable to understand intergenerational relations at work.

As intermediate conclusions, we can point out some issues that appear important and that raise challenges for companies and public policies. More in-depth conclusions will be developed in further reports (WP8).

A first issue concerns *the importance of trajectories*. On the one hand, differences are rooted in contexts, and on the other hand, trajectories are not neutral. If transition or precariousness is too long, it is difficult to reinvent a trajectory after 30, and even before. Past history matters in an individual trajectory and former experiences have an impact on further steps. The trajectories of young workers entering the enterprise have an impact on their relation to work, their specific expectations regarding the enterprise and the management.

A second key issue concerns *security and precariousness*. There is no common understanding of these terms between generations and within generations. Older workers see what is evaluated as quite normal paths by young workers as precarious paths, because experiences are different for each group. However, in the “standardised unstable paths” of young workers, there are points of rupture (too many changes in employment, no development of competences, no valuable experience, too long period of instability). At these points of rupture, there are bifurcations and what were quite normal paths become precarious trajectories. Moreover, security is not synonym of stability. Security of existence is necessary to develop private projects, to take part into social life. However, the meaning of a (in-)secure position differs according to individuals' attitudes regarding work. Stability in employment and long-term contract are of great value for those who have a more pragmatic attitude towards work. For those who have a more reflexive relation to work, security refers mainly to the possibility to hold a position for a certain period of time and stability means the capability to find quite rapidly new (and better) job opportunities.

A third important issue is the *heterogeneity within age groups*. Age groups are not homogeneous groups regarding their relation to work and generations. It is important to point this out because, notably for young workers, they are often considered as a whole group sharing the same attitude regarding work. Age does not determine as such a specific relation

46. Nibona, M., Guillaume, J.-F., “Entre souffrance et optimisme. Précarité des parcours professionnels et sentiment de vulnérabilité”, Guillaume, J.-F., *Parcours de vie. Regards croisés sur la construction des biographies contemporaines*, Editions de l'Université de Liège, Liège, 2005.

to work. As already mentioned, this latter is marked by trajectories. Because the diversification of trajectories is higher in the young generation, this effect is perhaps more visible in the young generation.

Another issue has to do with the *expressive dimension of work*. This latter is, definitively, still an important dimension of the relation to work, for all generations. There are a limited number of individuals who have very few expressive expectations regarding work and this is not linked to the fact of being part of a specific age group.

There is an increasing demand for a *new balance between work and life* and this is not only a topic concerning women. Tensions for active women are more important but the topic is important for both men and women, especially within the young generation. Companies will have to consider this topic, no longer through peripheral measures. Companies can interpret all the efforts that individuals, and particularly women and young workers, are doing to arrive at some equilibrium between a private life and a professional life, as a lack of motivation. However, this concern will be more acute for those who have a reflexive relation to work than those who have a pragmatic relation to work.

Relation to work and relation to employment appear as different meaningful angles in the appraisal of attitudes and behaviours at work. *Relation to work* refers to the content of work, the management of social relations, the knowledge approach, the ways of working, etc. *Relation to employment* concerns the position in the labour market, status, contract, career prospects; it is also embedded in trajectories. It is important to point out this distinction because it seems that potential areas of tensions between generations are concerning the relation to employment rather than the relation to work. In the typology of relation to work that we have drawn, in two types (I and II), the relation to employment dominates the relation to work and in the two other types (III and IV) the relation to work dominates the relation to employment.

The *intergenerational relations are more threatened by employment than by work*. Managing intergenerational relations means ensuring conditions for a mutual recognition of workers belonging to each age group. However, managerial practices tend to undermine this equilibrium and to redefine work coordination process. Age stereotypes and differentiated positions in work impact on intergenerational dialogue and cooperation.

There are obvious areas where differences between age groups are concrete: visions of the enterprise (communitarian versus open); ways of developing social bond; ICT-skills and the approach of communication shaped by these tools; informal interests. However, stating these differences is not pointing out potential sources of tensions between generations. The discourse of one generation regarding another is more controversial when employment is at stake, not work. The age group with the more controversial discourse about generations is the mid age group, perhaps those who feel more threatened by concurrence in work.

Families increasingly support young workers' integration into work. At different steps of the professional integration, interviews illustrate the growing importance of the family background to support future workers' transition to work and to adulthood. When this support is not available, young workers have to choose between two opposite strategies, either becoming an "entrepreneur" of themselves or being relegated in precariousness. Extended transition period tends also to delay youth's independence and participation to social life.

Managing age diversity at work, rather than reinforcing age segregation through targeted policies and measures that reinforce stereotypes, can support a better cooperation, knowledge transmission in both directions, mutual recognition and trust.

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Chapter 3: report from France

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1. Methodological considerations

1.1 Individual interviews

1.1.1 Respondent selection and interview implementation

The sample size precludes any claim to comprehensive representation. The choice of interviewees was therefore guided by the concern to ensure a diversity of situations in light of the following criteria: age, sex, family situation and education.

We combined several different entrance methods to achieve this:

- Entrance via the company: choice of employees working in the same work group to make divisions and ensure comparisons. Furthermore, this choice complies with the hypothesis of strong influence by the organisation on developments in relations to work
- Entrance via the institution: to impact a young audience, which does not yet have a stable relationship with employment, we contacted a local mission through which we had already worked on other research projects. Management agreed to take part in the study and organised a timetable of interviews with some young people using the local mission and tried to diversify profiles according to the criteria we provided, in particular sex and education levels. A single boy agreed to participate, whereas we interviewed four girls. Furthermore, as the local mission applies a sponsorship approach with volunteers, we met two sponsors through its good offices, one in the senior age group, the other in the intermediary age group. In these instances, the interview concerned the relationship with work of sponsors and their experience of sponsorship with young people
- Entrance via personal and professional networks: in a preliminary phase to experiment with the interview guide and thereafter to supplement the sample in light of missing situations.

We conducted interviews in a semi-directive manner using a common grid but on each occasion allowing a broad margin for interpretation and adaptation according to the situation.

Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two and a half hours.

Some respondents considered the interview an opportunity to convey a message (e.g. criticise an injustice) or review their professional situation. The interview prompted the respondent to work on himself or herself “to develop his own identity directly facing the interviewer at a level of difficulty and accuracy which far exceeds what is ordinarily done (...) You have to think and talk about oneself more accurately and more openly than is usually done in a slightly formal situation with a tape recorder in front of you”⁴⁷. This is why once the early reticence was overcome, most of our respondents were not content to provide the information requested but undertook without restraint an approach to explain and relate their own life.

1.1.2 Analysis method

With regard to the use of empirical material collected, we focused on a thematic analysis, which was implemented over two discrete phases:

- A preliminary moment of ‘description’ was intended to isolate and qualify the main aspects of each respondent’s relation to work (sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction at work, relation with the group (colleagues and supervisors), perception of the future, attachment to the company, level of professional investment, structure of life in and outside work)
- A later moment, a more ‘comprehensive’ time intended to outline an objective and subjective biography of each of the main explanation variables, which may offer information on behaviours and representations specific to work.

Once the thematic analysis was carried out, we adopted a transversal approach with the aim of developing a classification of relations to work. The professional investment of respondents when the interview was conducted soon emerged as the most relevant indicator to help us identify the various types of relation to work.

Data usage revealed that such an investment should be considered from a dual angle: time and identity. In other terms, the aim was to assess both whether work occupied in quantitative terms a large space in individuals’ lives and whether it was perceived as a major or secondary space in the process of personal realisation and development.

Three main criteria made it possible for us to objectivise and assess the type of respondents’ professional investment:

- the way in which the respondent himself defined his level of involvement in work in particular in comparison with the level he observed of his colleagues
- the time, emotional and symbolic importance attached to work in comparison with other spheres (social, friends, family, etc.) in his or her existence
- the time he allocated to work compared to legal requirements stipulated in his contract.

We therefore broke down interviews according to profile into three major categories:

- those with a strong investment in their careers

47. Kaufmann JC., *L’entretien compréhensif*, Dunod, Paris, p. 60.

- those inclined to maintain a relative balance in the structure of their social time and a harmonious arrangement between the various spheres of their existence
- those with a moderate or low investment in their careers.

The second phase of the classification task entailed isolate the dominant explanation variable for each interview which would account for the type of professional investment identified upstream (intensive professional investment / balance in social time / moderate or limited professional investment). This step made it possible for us to develop the following sub-categories:

- “desire to develop”, “loyalty to the company” and “passionate relation with the business” for the first work relationship model
- “work, a secondary component of the identity” and “work, a cornerstone of the identity construction” for the second work relationship model
- “dissatisfaction at work” and “alternative plans exist” in the third work relationship model.

1.1.3 Respondents’ social and professional characteristics

a) *Summary table of respondents*

Given name	Age	Sex	Marital and family situation	Basic education	Profession	Sector
Corinne	21	Female	Married - two children	BTS (= professional diploma) in sales	Sales assistant	Company which organises trade fairs
Cécile	22	Female	Single – no children	BEP (= City & Guilds’ diploma) in secretarial services	Administrative clerk	Charity structure
Aude	23	Female	Single – no children	Professional baccalaureate in accounting	Telesales operator	Company sub-contracting for EDF-GDF
Thomas	23	Male	Single – no children	BEP in accounting	Free newspaper distributor (part-time/no job guarantee)	SME
Maryse	24	Female	Single – no children	Master’s degree in history	History / geography teacher / part-time substitute teacher	Private secondary school
Yolande	24	Female	Single – no children	Professional bachelor’s degree in web businesses	Webmaster	Magazine
Richard •	25	Male	In couple – no children	BEP in electronics	PC technician	SME / sub-contractor for l’Oréal

Chloée	25	Female	In couple – no children	BTS [HND] in tourism	Desk manager	Company specialising in vehicle leasing
Philippe	26	Female	In couple – no children	Bac+5 [post-graduate degree] in applied arts	Computer graphics artist	SME specialising in duplication
Nicolas	27	Male	Single – no children	Electrician's baccalaureate	Electrician operator	Metallurgy company
Chantal	28	Female	Single – no children	BAC+5 in applied arts	Computer graphics artist	SME specialising in duplication
Jean-Luc	30	Male	In couple – no children	Baccalaureate level	Branch director	Company specialising in vehicle leasing
Catherine	30	Female	Single – no children	Baccalaureate	Sales woman	Company retailing construction materials
François	31	Male	In couple - one child	Technical baccalaureate	Mechanic	Metallurgy company
Marianne	34	Female	In couple - two children	Bachelor's degree in Russian and literature; post-graduate DESS degree in international assessments	Writer	Company specialising in written copies of oral events (conferences, seminars, etc.)
Matthieu	37	Male	Married – one child	BTS in sales	Sales advisor	Bank branch
Nicole	43	Female	Single – no children	Bac + 5 in advertising /Marketing	Artistic director	Advertising agency
Olivier	47	Male	Married – two children	CAP diploma in mechanics	Head operator	Metallurgy company
Gilles	48	Male	Married – two children	Electrician's cap diploma	Technician	Metallurgy company
Maurice	48	Male	Married– two children	BTS in accounting / administration	Company executive	SME specialising in processing used oils
Hervé	52	Male	Married – two children	Mechanic's CAP diploma	Fleet head	Company specialising in vehicle leasing
Marc	53	Male	Married – three children	CAP in public works	Vendor	Company specialising in the sale of construction material
Béatrice	53	Female	Married– three children	CAP secretarial diploma	Sales advisor	Bank branch
Anne	54	Female	Single– no children	Ph.D. in sociology	Scientist and educator	University of Perpignan
Jacques	60	Male	Single – no children	Chemical engineer	Secretary general	Refining company

b) Models of relations to work and breakdown of respondents

	Intensive professional investment
Desire to develop	Philippe, Jean-Luc, François, Chloée, Maurice
Passionate relationship with the business	Anne, Nicole
Loyalty to the company	Hervé, Gilles, Jacques, Marc, Olivier

	Balanced social time
Work, a secondary component of the identity	Cécile, Aude, Corinne, Marianne
Work, a cornerstone of identity construction	Richard, Yolande, Catherine

	Moderate or limited professional investment
Dissatisfaction with work	Chantal, Maryse, Béatrice, Thomas
Alternative projects exist	Matthieu, Nicolas

1.2 Group interviews

1.2.1 Respondent selection and interview implementation

The first objective pursued in group interviews was to collect material to enable us to analyse interactions forged at work between employees from different generations. The aim was not only to gather respondents' point of view but also to provide them with the opportunity of comparing their outlook and position their attitude in concrete professional situations to go beyond superficial opinions and avoid as much as possible the pitfall of abusive and stereotypical generalisations devoid of context.

This is why we believed it was necessary to consolidate employees pursuing careers in the same company and even in the same department. This decision was consolidated by data collected during individual interviews, which revealed how vivid the effect of the organisation was in developing trans-generational relations.

Our personal and professional network made it possible – albeit not without difficulty – to arrange group interviews in three companies whose names are deliberately omitted to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the first is an insurance company, the second a road haulage company and the third a specialist in water management.

Each interview involved between four and seven interviewees of different ages and, wherever possible, different sexes. In contrast, we believed it would be beneficial to optimise conditions for discussion and facilitate dialogue by bringing together individuals with fairly similar education levels and sectors.

Exchanges were structured around two main axes:

- The first axis concerned relations between generations at work and thus relations forged in the work space between employees from different generations and age groups
- The second axis concerned employee representations and behaviours with regard to work and thus the relationship at work between individuals from different generations. The underlying idea was to assess whether differentiated attitudes could lead to conflicting relations between socialised individuals in various economic, social and technological situations.

We considered these interviews meetings, admittedly highly focused in terms of theme, but even so were very open. During these interviews, participants were encouraged to express themselves as freely as possible.

The interviews lasted between two hours and fifteen minutes and three hours.

1.2.2 Analysis method

Needless to say, the hard core of our analysis consisted of data gathered from group interviews. We did, however, make use of individual interviews, which were conducted in the first part of the study involving employees working in the same company. This was the case for 13 interviewees working in five different entities, a metallurgy company, a banking institution, a company specialising in the sale of construction material, a reproduction-photography company and a company specialising in vehicle leasing (see summary table of semi-directive interviews).

With regard to the use of empirical material collected, we focused on a thematic analysis, which was implemented over two discrete phases:

- A preliminary moment of ‘description’ intended to identify and characterise various relational registers to be used to qualify interactions between employees of different age groups. We were prompted by the will to cover the variety of forms of cohabitation between generations which can be found in an employee area and which are not limited to conflict. This task allowed us to isolate basically three recurring configurations, although they are present unevenly: “cooperation”, “remote links” and “tension”.
- A second moment more focused on ‘comprehension’ was intended to identify the main explanatory variables in each configuration, which could account for, and even ensure progress in, identification of the solidarity and tension factors between generations.

Once the thematic analysis was carried out, we adopted a transversal approach with the aim of progressing in understanding the organisation effect and the impact of local action in developing relations between generations.

1.2.3 Respondents' social and professional characteristics

a) *Water management company*

Given name	Age	Family and marital situation	Basic education	Profession
Jérôme	25	Single, no children	BTS in sales	Works assistant
Fabrice	26	Single, no children	CAP in boiler making	Multi-disciplinary boiler-maker
Bernard,	40	Two children	BEP in electro-mechanics	Maintenance agent / electrician
Antoine	47	Married, two children	CAP mechanics	Multi-disciplinary mechanic
Fabrice	49	Married, two children	CAP	Calibrator
Jean-Luc	50	Married, two children	CAP adjustor	Multi-disciplinary mechanic

b) *Road haulage company*

Given name	Age	Family and marital situation	Basic education	Profession
Sandrine	25	Single, no children	Professional master's degree in HR	HR assistant
Léontine	32	Single, no children	Professional master's degree in ergonomics	Project manager ("handicaps" in the HR department)
Philippe	55	Married, one child	Psycho-motor training and management DU diploma	Project manager ("handicaps" in the HR department)
Marc	55	Married, two children	Studying for Ph.D. in economics and labour sociology	HRD

c) *Insurance company*

Given name	Age	Family and marital situation	Basic education	Profession
Nathalie	27	Single	DESS post-graduate degree in finance	Studies manager, finance division
Marion	30	Single	B.Sc. in chemistry	IT engineer
Françoise	33	Single	DESS post-graduate degree in finance	HR studies manager
Agnès	37	Married, one child	DESS degree in IT management	HR manager
Mathilde	42	Married, two children	BTS in insurance	Technician in claims department
Roméo	42	Married, two children	DUT in IT	Administrator, IT
Camille	56	Married, two children	DUT in business	Personnel administrator

2. Work relationships models: an essay in typology

2.1 First “type”: intensive professional investment

2.1.1 Respondents’ social and professional characteristics

	Given name	Age	Sex	Marital and family situation	Basic education	Profession	Sector
Desire to develop	Chloée	25	Female	In couple – no children	BTS in tourism	Desk manager	Company specialising in vehicle leasing
	Philippe*	26	Female	In couple – no children	Bac+5 in applied arts	Computer graphics artist	SME specialising in reprographics
	Jean-Luc*	30	Male	In couple – no children	Baccalaureate level	Branch manager	Company specialising in vehicle leasing
	François	31	Male	In couple – one child	Technical baccalaureate	Mechanic	Metallurgy company
	Maurice	48	Male	Married – two children	BTS in accounting / administration	Executive	SME specialising in used oil processing
Passionate relationship with business	Nicole*	43	Female	Single – no children	Bac + 5 in advertising /Marketing	Artistic director	Advertising firm
	Anne*	54	Female	Single – no children	Ph.D. in sociology	Scientist and educator	University of Perpignan
Loyalty to the company	Olivier	47	Male	Married – two children	CAP mechanics	Station head	Metallurgy company
	Gilles*	48	Male	Married – two children	CAP electricity	Technician	Metallurgy company
	Hervé*	52	Male	Married – two children	CAP mechanics	Fleet manager	Company specialising in vehicle leasing
	Marc*	53	Male	Married – three children	CAP public works	Vendor	Company selling construction materials
	Jacques	60	Male	Single – no children	Chemical engineer	General secretary	Refining company

*Interviews considered particularly symbolic of the type concerned; summaries provided below.

2.1.2 Clarification of the ‘type’ and its ‘sub-categories’

As noted, respondents featured various socio-demographic characteristics in terms of age, sex, basic education and qualification in the position occupied as well as in the professional context in which they work. Such diversity should, however, be taken in the context of two significant factors: they all have permanent job contracts and a fairly secure professional position, whereas the women do not have children.

Respondents all shared a specific feature: they define themselves as employees with a strong investment in their work. In contrast, their relationship to schooling is far from similar. For example, Jean-Luc decided to drop out of university after fairly chaotic secondary schooling, whereas Nicole, Anne and Philippe enthusiastically and brilliantly pursued university careers. It would appear that there is no mechanical link between the type of school and professional investment. The two other models of work relations confirm this hypothesis.

The intensive investment by these respondents in their professional lives is expressed in various forms. For example, Philippe, Jean-Luc and Chloée spend far more hours at the office than is stipulated in their job contract; Nicole and Anne allow themselves very few holidays or much relaxation during their paid leave; Marc, Maurice, Jacques and Olivier deliberately focused on their careers at the cost of family life in the belief that their professional development demanded this sacrifice, whereas Hervé accepts tasks which are occasionally under-qualified to renew the company’s business and boost growth and Gilles develops projects intended to improve the induction of new recruits. These initiatives far exceed the scope of his official responsibilities.

The professional sphere therefore holds a predominant position in relation to the two other dimensions of their existence (family and friends, organisations, etc.), which does not mean that the youngest such as Jean-Luc, Philippe and Chloée express the wish over the short or medium term to restore a more satisfactory balance with the aim of not overlooking their personal life for much longer.

Furthermore, the deliberate and committed behaviour of these respondents with regard to work leads some of them to criticise the lack of recognition from which they consider they suffer. They regret that their contribution to the company exceeds their desserts (symbolic for Gilles and material for Philippe and Jean-Luc).

The replies offered by these respondents are strongly imbued with a meritocratic morality which prompts them both to value the individual effort made by everyone to steer their careers upwards and also to minimise the structural and family determinants which may upset to prevent the implementation of personal plans.

Many of them (Jacques, Gilles, Marc, Jean-Luc, Philippe, Hervé, Maurice and, to a lesser degree, Anne) offered a fairly negative view of young people currently entering companies. The signs of unease are clear as they see it: flight from work, absenteeism, high turnover, etc. A comparison with new recruits, especially when respondents have managerial responsibilities with regard to them (Hervé and Jean-Luc), can result in tension emerging. They criticise their cavalier attitude, their lack of motivation and propensity for work. However, they are not content to regret young people’s inclination to maintain a removed relationship with work; they also attempt to explain it in a more comprehensive view. For example, in Maurice’s opinion, the specific feature of the young can be attributed to the large

number of restructuring plans during the 1980s, which helped young people question the benefits of investing in work given the high risk of being made redundant at the slightest change in the economy.

The high level of professional investment in these respondents arises from the combination of several factors: ethical approach, individual strategy and pragmatic calculation combining in different proportions depending on the individual to explain the strong involvement they demonstrate in their profession.

Thus, intensive commitment to work may be prompted firstly by a profound desire to develop (Philippe, Jean-Luc, François, Chloée and Maurice), even though some respondents (Philippe, Jean-Luc and Maurice) also offer as an avenue of explanation the values imparted by their parents. All these respondents expressed the desire to progress in terms of position and job and offered precise plans for the future. They acknowledged that they wished to extend their sphere of influence and responsibility, move closer to centres of power and decision-making and finally enhance the benefit from their activity by finding a job which would enable them to make more use of their creative or analytical qualities. Their ambition therefore prompted them to demonstrate stronger involvement in work even though they are not always satisfied with their position. Their ambition also drives them to increase their plans to change jobs and remain attentive to all opportunities for training or promotion, which may arise.

A passionate relationship with their work is the second factor, which might explain how some respondents invest without restraint in their work (Nicole and Anne). These two women perceive the professional aspects of their existence as a primary and even exclusive (in Nicole's case) vector for their personal fulfilment. Their work is both a reflection and a foundation of their personality and constitutes a major sphere of expression for their subjectivity as well as a central dimension in their identity. A noteworthy fact is that within our sample, respondents who expressed a passionate relationship with their work and considered work a condition (not merely a component) of their happiness had very advanced qualifications. This observation may qualify the theses developed by Baudelot and Gollac.

Finally, significant professional investment may arise from the close link with strong loyalty and acknowledgement components that some respondents feel with regard to their company (Marc, Hervé, Gilles, Jacques and Olivier). This attachment (which can almost be considered emotional) with a structure of affiliation may co-exist with the expression of criticisms about strategic decisions made by management (Marc and Olivier) and even with a degree of dissatisfaction at work (Gilles). Furthermore, it is interesting to observe that this association (intensive investment in work – strong attachment to the company) could be seen only among the male over-50s (and 60s). These respondents fully embodied the traditional model of a relationship with work, which obtained in France for decades. They also pointed out that the younger generation tended to consider the hegemonic value of work relatively and maintain more contractual and instrumental relations with the company as a result both of the widespread increased job insecurity and of changes in society. For exploratory purposes it may be enlightening to refer here to the triptych of “exit, voice and loyalty” by Hirschman⁴⁸ with regard to the various individual attitudes to organisations. Within older generations, in particular in large corporations with a strong internal market rationale, the relationship between the employee and the organisation more often was based on loyalty –with an

48. Hirschman A.O., *Exit, voice, loyalty*, Harvard University Press, 1990.

occasionally paternalistic relationship – or, on the contrary on protestation (voice) – in a conflicting relationship – which was often mediated by highly protecting unions. However, in both cases (loyalty and voice), the link with the corporation was part of a long-term relationship. Today, young people seem more inclined towards a rationale of defection (exit) and freely abandon a structure if payment – symbolic or material – is deemed insufficient and change employer as the opportunities for higher salaries and transferable human capital arise.

An analysis of the motives helping to prompt an intensive professional investment for respondents therefore led us to sub-divide this model of relations to work into three sub-categories, which also match a specific time mode:

- the desire to progress (relationship with work focused on the future)
- a passionate relationship with the business (relationship with work focused on the present)
- loyalty to the company (relationship with work anchored in the past).

2.1.3 Interviews symbolic of the “type”

a) *Desire to develop*

Philippe, 26 years old, in a couple, without child, computer graphics artist in a small enterprise

The school and career path of Philippe is rather linear. After a Baccalauréat (A-level), she passes a vocational certificate (BTS) in visual communication. She then joined the school of “Les Gobelins”, where she learnt photography’s techniques. Now, Philippe is computer graphics artist in a small enterprise where she was the first salaried employee. His work has two different components: a repetitive part that consists in touching up photos and a more creative part that consists in creating new products. His boss is not very present because he is busy with the different enterprise that he created and manages. That’s why Philippe has a great responsibility, which allows her to develop and progress in her work. But this responsibility is sometimes difficult to bear, all the more as it is not recognised in terms of wages. She considers that she is not representative of her generation, because she puts a lot into work and she does not count the time she spends for work. This involvement is induced by a strong ambition: she really wants to progress in terms of functional skills and hierarchical level, even if she plans to have children and do not want to sacrifice to his private life for his work.

Jean-Luc, 30 years old, in a couple, high school diploma, director of an agency of a big company specialised in renting cars.

Considering a relationship rather distanced with the studies he obtained his high school diploma only in the term of four years. He stopped early his studies. He first knew a succession of short-term contracts, and then he has been hired as an agent of the counter in an airport. His relation to work was at that time instrumental. He had a very fast advancement, becoming very quickly chief of a group in this enterprise and in the next one, the cars renting company. Recently, he became chief of agency. He has shown great dedication and he expresses a negative judgement about the young generation relation to work: he complains about their passivity, their absence, their lack of rigour. He has put a lot of efforts into the company objectives, and he expects a return: if does not get the promotion he wants, he will limit his professional investment.

b) *Passionate relationship with work*

Anne, 54 years old, single, without child, doctor in sociology, teacher and researcher at the University

Anne has got her PhD and she had to wait for ten years before holding a permanent job at the University. Work has a central place in her life and it represents a way of personal fulfilling: “when you think about it, you spend a lot of time in work. Even if you work to earn money, you cannot reduce work to its earning function”. She sees in work a way to develop herself. She keeps alive a passionate relation to work, to the core of her job: “teaching something to somebody is maybe the most beautiful

thing that can exist”. However, despite this passionate relation to work, she can criticise the functioning of her University and more generally the French research and university system.

Nicole, 43 years old, single, graduate of a school of communication, artistic director in a large advertising agency

Nicole’s family background is favoured. She did not want to work for the public sector; she wanted to have a job that brings in money. When she left the college, she was hired by a major advertising agency. Eight years later, she was promoted to artistic director. She loves her job: “it’s really exciting. You have a great deal of creative dimension”. She appreciates both the content of her profession and the necessary management responsibilities. The stress generated by the hyper competitive sector contributes to motivate Nicole. It allows her to discover her limits: “I need challenges in order to advance”. Nicole defines herself as someone very involved in her work. She recognises that her professional investment does not let her any room for engaging in other activities outside work and in particular to build a family.

c) **Loyalty to the company**

Hervé, 52 years old, married, two children, vocational training certificate (Certificat d’aptitude professionnelle, CAP), supervisor in a cars rental agency called “Budget”.

Hervé was young when he began working, just after his “CAP” in garage handing. The CAP (Certificat d’aptitude professionnelle) is a vocational training certificate taken at secondary school. His job career is diversified and discontinuous, contrary to many members of his generation, and although he has always worked in the sector of cars. “Budget”, the firm where he is working today, hired him 3 years ago as supervisor of an agency’s cars stock.

Hervé expresses a high degree of job satisfaction. He appreciates firstly the diversity of the work contents, as well as the rich social relations that he can have at work. Moreover, the firm was in a tricky financial situation when he arrived. He is proud of the energy he puts in this rebuilding adventure, even if he has to do under qualified tasks. Lastly, he also appreciates the friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

However, the supervising dimension of his work is a source of difficulties for him, in particular when he has to face with the inadequate behaviour of young workers. With his experience in this sector, he thinks that the behaviour of young workers has been deteriorating since 20 years: recurrent absenteeism, inadequate behaviours, lack of professional rigour and investment, unreliability, etc.

Marc, 53 years old, three children, technical school certificate (BEP, Brevet d’études) in civil engineering, salesman in a large company selling building materials.

He began working when he was young. He first worked in an interim agency and then his desire to build a family lead him to look for a more stable job in a large company. He has been in the same company for thirty years. Entered as a storekeeper, he became general salesman and then a specialised one. He enjoys his work, especially because of good contacts with customers: “what I liked the most is the advice I give to clients”. Marc defines himself as a person very involved in work, which has always been an important dimension of his life. He always puts a lot into his work, although it means neglecting the education of his children, borne to a large extent by his wife, according to a standardised division of roles. Marc views the family space and the professional space as two competitive universes in terms of time and emotional investment: as for him, he gave greater place to work, believing that his professional career demanded this sacrifice. He sees his company as his second family. He deplores the behaviour of the young generations, which are characterised by impatience: “they want everything immediately whereas they know nothing and they don’t show yet their abilities”.

Gilles, 48 years old, married, two children, electrician vocational training certificate (Certificat d’aptitude professionnelle, CAP), technician in a large metallurgical company

Gilles was young when he began working and he has worked for more than thirty years in a metallurgical company. Because of the closure of the plats where he worked, he has to move in order to integrate another site of his industrial group. He began his career in an “unskilled” worker post and he is now specialised. He considers his working conditions have deteriorated since ten years and he gets less satisfaction from his work, especially because of the erosion of the working collective. He regretted the good atmosphere that existed before. He attributes these changes to the reorganisations, the autoimmunisation of production processes, the necessity of working “just-in-time”, the turnover in teams, the intensification of work, the change of mentality among the young generation characterised

by a growing individualism: “nowadays, the youth do not have the same state of mind. Indeed, you have two types of new workers: on the one hand, those who are here by default. They don’t like their job. They are here for the wage. They get involved as little as possible. Their life is not in the job: it is after the job. On the other hand, you have those who want to succeed, and to succeed quickly. So, for them, what counts is to be docile, to be ahead, to be appreciated from the chief”. Gilles is a union militant.

2.2 Second “type”: balance in social time

2.2.1 Respondents’ social and professional characteristics

	Given name	Age	Sex	Marital and family situation	Basic education	Profession	Sector
Work, a secondary component of identity	Cécile*	22	F	Single, no children	BEP in secretarial services	Administrative clerk	Charity structure
	Aude*	23	F	Single, no children	Professional baccalaureate in accounting	Tele-advisor	EDF-GDF sub-contractor
	Corinne	21	F	Married, two children	BTS in sales	Sales assistant	Company organising trade fairs
	Marianne	34	F	In couple, two children	B.A. in literature and Russian; DESS post-graduate degree in international assessments	Writer	Company specialising in written reports of verbal events (conference, seminars, etc.)
Work, an aspect as important as (and complementary with) other spheres of life	Richard*	25	M	In couple, no children	BEP in electronics	PC technician	SME / l’Oréal sub-contractor
	Yolande	24	M	Single, no children	Professional bachelor’s degree in web businesses	Webmaster	Magazine
	Catherine	30	M	Single, no children	Baccalaureate	Vendor	Construction materials Selling

* Interviews considered particularly symbolic of the type concerned; summaries provided below.

2.2.2 Clarification of the “type” and its “sub-categories”

As noted, these respondents had different social and demographic characteristics in terms of age, sex, education and qualification for the position they held as well as the business context in which they were progressing. Such diversity should, however, be taken in the context of two significant points: the vast majority of respondents were females (only Richard was

male); there was no older employee in our sample conforming to this model of relationship with work. This observation prompts us to highlight the existence of a two-fold movement: there is both a relative break between generations in the manner of devising a structure between personal and professional life and also a continuation in some differences arising from gender, in particular with regard to career orientation, the division of domestic and family tasks and a reconciliation of social time.

These respondents shared a specific feature: they expressed a polycentric definition of existence in which work is one sphere of fulfilment among others and where, consequently, it was important to maintain a balance between social time and ensure continued harmony between the various spheres. These spheres can be broadly reduced to the professional sphere on the one hand and the personal sphere on the other. When discussing their experience outside work, most respondents stated that they made an investment only in relation to themselves, their families, their children and friends and not in relation to actions more focused on the ‘public realm’.

Opportunities for reconciliation provided by work making it compatible with extra-professional activities were for these respondents a major criterion in assessing the value of a job. Ultimately, they focused above all on the quality of life they understood in global terms. Their identity requirements referred to a plural identity over several phases in which the target was to enhance the multiple facets of the singularity of their existence in different social times. It was therefore vital for them to ‘feel good at work’ but also to have free time ‘to do something else’ and in particular to ‘take care of myself and those around me’. This is why the number of hours worked and above all the possibility of managing working hours in a flexible and independent manner, as well as the geographical proximity of home and work, were central factors in criteria determining their choice of job. Contractual stability was another major aspect in providing the requisite security for developing a personal life. Work in the form of a statutory job position for an unspecified period provides access to ‘life security’ (to use an expression frequently applied in interviews).

These respondents therefore refused to devote themselves body and soul to their work and in particular to sacrifice their family responsibilities in pursuit of a career. From this point of view, the parental figure may act as a foil when parents’ extensive professional investment did not yield appropriate returns. This rejection of the sacrificial model does not, however, mean that respondents reduced work to its barest economic expression. Many of them also mentioned its integrating and expressive functions and valued the feeling of social usefulness it provides or even the opportunities for emancipation inherent in work. This final point was particularly mentioned by young women whose mothers did not work and who did not wish to duplicate this maternal approach.

With that said, these respondents did rank the relative importance of the personal and professional aspects of their lives differently. Two sub-groups emerged.

The first included individuals (Cécile, Aude, Corinne and Marianne), all women, for whom personal and family life was clearly far more important than a career, with work rivalled and even exceeded as an identity factor by other “components” (Méda, 2004; Garner, Méda, Senik, 2006). Given a situation to reconcile such issues, these respondents chose (or planned to choose for those who did not yet have family responsibilities) the private sphere as the primary focus of their priorities. Women with children (Corinne and Marianne) focused on the possibility of relative self-determination for their working hours in choosing their current

jobs; those without children (Cécile, Aude) thought ahead about leaving work temporarily (Aude) or even permanently (Cécile) if they have the material possibility of focusing fully on bringing up and caring for their children. Despite their young age, Cécile and Aude conform to a traditional model, which one tends to associate more easily with previous generations. They believed that working mothers cannot give as much energy and affection to their children as those not in work.

In the case of these four respondents we can truly consider a loss of the central position of work within an ‘exocentric position of work in relation to other life interests [and] its expulsion to the periphery of one’s biography’ (C.Offe). Placing work in an off-centre position results from the combination of an extrinsic effect of work (activities which also generate identity with which it competes) and an intrinsic effect of work (low salaries, difficult working conditions, minor feeling for the profession in question). This finding validates the hypothesis that the decline in the value of work or more accurately the dispute with its hegemony is the result of a two-fold movement: the growing complexity of society, i.e., its functional differentiation in social sub-systems, and differentiated registers of activity and meaning (S. Scher, 2002). There is also a deterioration in working conditions, which cause a growing hiatus between high expectations from work and the limited possibilities of fulfilling them (Roulleau-Berger, 2001)

Furthermore, these respondents did not offer any professional plans for the future and refused to develop specific plans on possible career opportunities they could pursue to progress in their work. Focusing on the present by refusing to foster ambitions which may be come to fruition made it possible for them to avoid disappointments they understood to be difficult to overcome, having experimented in the past. Given the extreme uncertainty of the future, trying to plan ahead for events, which would structure their careers struck them as useless and even counter-productive. They therefore focused on a philosophy of the present without losing sight of the values they considered vital in life: family, health and friends.

The second sub-group of respondents (Richard, Yolande and Catherine) expressed a significantly different relationship with work and time. The harmonious structure of social time admittedly emerged as a central concern in these individuals’ professional accounts. However, work from which they draw confidence and self-esteem remains a highly structural focus around which their daily life and system of representation are organised. The professional aspects of their existence were perceived as a source of enhancement and personal fulfilment, but also as a stabilising factor which entrenched the identity. Work was all the more important for some individuals given that it represented a solid basis for identity in a world of uncertainty, risks and ontological insecurity marked by crumbling institutional support⁴⁹.

These respondents resolved not to allow their professional lives invade or compromise their personal lives, but still considered that fulfilment at work was a vital condition to access a form of peace of mind in their private lives. Their accounts therefore reflected a synergy approach devoid of competition between their personal and professional spheres and which in their outlook participated in a combined and complementary manner in the process of personal fulfilment. All, including Richard, believed that a working mother (who can therefore be enhanced outside the family home) discharged her nurturing and parental

49. Beck U., *La société du risque, sur la voie d’une autre modernité ?*, Aubier, Collection Alto, Paris, 2001 (original edition 1986).

responsibilities in a more satisfactory manner than a housewife. Consequently, these respondents tended to focus on reconciliation and balance as the means for adjusting their existence.

They stated that they were ready to make concessions in their personal life provided that such sacrifices remained exceptional. Intensive, occasional investment in work would therefore be prompted by the desire to create favourable conditions for subsequent progress. These respondents were not content with 'what they have', but adopted a clear position in a career development rationale. The outlook for progress was in their opinion a major criterion to assess the quality of a job. They were driven by the desire to progress in their work and not only to feel good in it. They developed quite specific plans with regard to the steps they planned to take to achieve their goals: changes in position or profession, internal training and mobility within companies. All opportunities for change, be it rising in grade or extending skills, were considered suitable insofar as there was initially a feeling of progress which gave meaning to work.

Pursuing a career, understood as a progressive path, therefore emerged as the preponderant aspect of their identity at work at the cost of belonging (work collectives, class, business, company). They were therefore "trajectory individuals seeking to conquer [their] personal identity and social success" (Erhenberg, 2002) who perceived work as a trajectory testing the individual in which a fundamental value is applied, self-esteem. A hypothesis may be developed in which this specific relation to work represents a relative specific factor for younger generations. Some sociologists note this act of transformation in meaning assigned to work and claim that "we are coming to the end of an epoch in which the value of being a work is valued by belonging and collective action [to enter] a world in which pride in oneself is structured at work and in the path work enables. This may well configure new feelings of belonging which are far more unstable than in the past, or new forms of involvement in collective actions which seek their own justification" (B. Eme, 2004). Thus, identity at work, in contrast with previous dominant acceptances, did not mean for these respondents being assigned to a given category; "it was the future and mobility of people, flow and not stagnation, the path not the territory, it was what has not yet come to be, not what already is".

An analysis of the differentiated conditions for devising the structure between personal and professional life for these respondents therefore led us to sub-divide this model of relations with work ("Balance between social times") into two sub-categories, which also matched a specific form of relationship with time:

- work as a secondary component of identity (relationship with work focused on the present and the satisfaction it produces)
- work, an aspect as important as (in complementary with) other spheres of life (relationship with work focused on the future and construction of a path).

2.2.3 Interviews symbolic of the “type”

a) **Work, a secondary component of identity**

Aude, 23 years old, single, without child, Professional “Baccalauréat”, Accounting, , adviser for the clients of EDF (the public energy company).

Aude works in a company that is a sub-contractor of EDF. She has a permanent contract but the recruitment processes was very long. She is satisfied with her job because of the good atmosphere and the content of the work, and in particular the relation to the clients: “working in team and being with clients is the part of the job that I like the most”. She considers that the wage is not up to the work that is done. Work is not only a way of earning money. It is also a way of being useful. But work should not spill over into the personal life: if she had a child, she thinks that this would have an impact on her investment into work: “for me, devoting time to children is better than devoting time to work, when it is possible of course”. , If she had to choose a new job, she would give greater importance to the balance between professional and family life.

Cécile, 22 years old, single, administrative employee in an association (state-subsidised contract)

Cécile lives with her parents in Villeurbanne. Her father is a worker and her mother inactive. She obtained a technical school certificate (BEP, Brevet d’études professionnelles) in secretarial work, but she failed the professional “baccalauréat” (A level). She wants to sit the exam again, but without affiliation to school (literally, as a “free candidate”). She also wanted to prepare the driving test without asking a financial help to her parents. That’s why she decided to search a job, and thank to the local agency for helping young people with difficulties (Mission locale), she found a job with a state-financed contract (CAE, Contrat d’Accompagnement vers l’Emploi) in an association called “The fiends of the street” (Les amis de la rue), which help the homeless (with housing, shower, medical help, a sympathetic ear, etc.). Her work consists in sorting out letters, filing, answering at phone, keyboarding data, giving certificates, etc. At the beginning, she found the job difficult, because she was afraid of meeting homeless people: she did not know how to react, when homeless people trying to pick her up. Now, after having benefited from her colleagues advices, she has familiarised herself with her work. She appreciates both the contents and the atmosphere, which are both very important according to her “for me, the most important thing is to feel good. If I do not feel well, it would be useless to pursue. If I do not like what I am doing, I do not see why I would stay. I prefer a work that I like (...). Good relationships with colleagues are very important. I prefer to feel good with everybody. We have good laughs. Time is passing. You know you have done a good job at the end of the day and you come back at home without worrying”.

It is a fixed-term and part-time job (26 hours a week), renewable every six weeks during two years. This part-time job is insufficient in terms of wage, but it allows her spending time in preparing the “Baccalauréat” and the driving test. Initially, she wanted to prepare the BTS (Brevet de Technicien Supérieur), a national professional degree that can be prepared in two years after the “baccalauréat”, and her parents encourage her to study. But, now, she can’t see herself coming back to school. Her experience leads her to depreciate the importance of the “Baccalauréat”. For her, knowing the working world is important. Her mother has greatly encouraged her to work, not to stay at home and be a housewife, as she is. Cécile thinks that financial independence is important for women. However, she is not thinking of leaving someone outside family to look after her small children: “if I have small children, I do not want to leave them”.

Disappointed by her failures, she doesn’t want to make some plan for the future. She stands up for a way of life where one lives in the present moment and focuses on the main things: “I live from day to day. We do not know what happens tomorrow. Before, I said “when I have my ‘baccalauréat”, when I have my driving lessons, I will do this, we will go on holiday”. But I was so deeply perturbed after my failure that I prefer to live from day to day now (...). Health and family are the most important things. The other things come after”.

b) **Work, an aspect as important as (and complementary with) other spheres of life**

Richard, 25 years, in couple without child, technician in micro-computing, with a fixed-term contract
Richard was born in Paris of Turkish parents. After a technical school certificate (BEP) in electronics, he planed to join the general curriculum (through a course of adaptation) then he renounced. For two years, he worked on construction sites, did handling, all sorts of painful works. This difficult experience led him to make the decision to come back to school. He integrated a two-years training (DU), with an

apprenticeship contract with L'Oréal, as an assistant in office automation. At the end of these two years, he obtained the diploma of office assistant (DU), but he did not find any enterprise to continue his training formation. After some months of fruitless research, he was hired by a software enterprise and some months later, by the intermediary one of his apprenticeship former master, one proposes him a post in another services company to work with L'Oréal where he is already known and appreciated. This is the post that he holds currently, even if he regrets a little to have stopped the studies at the level of the DU: he would like in fact to become engineer. For Richard the work is structuring and determines the other parts of life. He thinks that, even millionaire, he would not stop working. However, he would not want that the work overlaps too much on his personal life: he does not wish to work more and harder, even if he is ready to do punctual concessions. He attaches great importance to his family and friends.

2.3 Third “type”: limited professional investment

2.3.1 Respondents’ social and professional characteristics

	Given name	Age	Sex	Marital and family situation	Basic education	Profession	Sector
Dissatisfaction at work	Thomas*	23	M	Single, no children	BEP in accounting	Free newspaper distributor (part-time, temporary job)	SME
	Maryse*	24	F	Single, no children	Master’s in history	History / geography teacher, part-time substitute teacher	Private secondary school
	Chantal*	28	F	Single, no children	BAC+5 in applied arts	Computer graphics artist	SME specialising in duplication
	Béatrice*	53	F	Married, three children	CAP in secretarial services	Sales advisor	Bank branch
Alternative projects exist	Nicolas	27	M	Single, no children	Electrician’s baccalaureate	Electrician operator	Metallurgy company
	Matthieu*	37	M	Married, one child	BTS in sales action	Sales advisor	Bank branch

* Interviews considered particularly symbolic of the type concerned; summaries provided below.

2.3.2 Clarification of the “type” and “sub-categories”

As noted, respondents featured various socio-demographic characteristics in terms of age, sex, basic education and qualification in the position occupied as well as in the professional context in which they work. Such diversity should, however, be taken in the context of an interesting factor which should be emphasised: all the young people in this category (Chantal, Maryse, Medhi and Nicolas), irrespective of whether they had a permanent job contract or not, experienced difficulties in joining the labour market, as shown by the many short-term jobs without qualifications they were forced to accept once they completed their education.

These respondents shared a specific feature: they made a moderate or even low investment in their work. Various behaviours encountered during interviews provided support for this finding: strict respect for working hours and attributions stipulated in the job contract, working to rule, reticence about working overtime, refusing a promotion and the predominant

role given to the balance between work and personal life were vital criteria for selecting a job. There was also an active commitment to extra-professional activities, a ranking of values which focused more on family than on work and the negation of the possibility of fulfilment in work along with the intention of leaving work to fulfil a parental role to the fullest, etc.

A preliminary analysis of the interviews enabled us to highlight the correlation, which can exist between a moderate professional investment and dissatisfaction with work, the latter running the risk of incurring a propensity (imposed or deliberate) to limit one's involvement in the company. This configuration matched four of our respondents: Chantal, Maryse, Medhi and Béatrice. These individuals suffered from being boxed in a professional situation out of kilter with their aspirations and/or qualifications, even though the relegation process applicable to them differed from one respondent to another (insecure position for Maryse and Medhi; reclassification for Chantal; age discrimination for Béatrice).

Maryse and Medhi epitomised the erosion in 'traditional' norms in employment and trend toward more insecure jobs, which affects firstly young workers including those with more qualifications (Forgeot and Gautié, 1997).

For example, Maryse despite her master's degree managed after a long 'nightmare' period to find only a part-time temporary teaching position (six hours a week) in a private secondary school. The forced shorter working week, far from pushing to the enlightened avant-garde of emancipated employee status, was in her case a major source of personal destabilisation. In addition to her teaching job, which afforded her much satisfaction, her low income forced her to take on basic wage jobs to supplement her income. Maryse therefore experienced disparate work in that her activity as a teacher cannot reconcile social integration, economic benefits and self-fulfilment. The imposed disassociation prompted in her a reaction of revolt, which was worsened by her low income with regard to professional integration and the extensive schooling investment she made. Given the extent of her difficulties, Maryse therefore expressed deep lassitude to the extent that she wanted to drop teaching for a while and move abroad working in humanitarian missions.

Although Maryse's case is an archetypal example of displacement affecting young graduates on the job market, Thomas (who was also in a situation of insecurity and even relative poverty) represented the nightmare experience facing young people with few or no qualifications and matching career paths tantamount to "disaffiliation" (Castel) entailing failure at school, a variety of courses and temporary contracts, job-seeking in vain, forced co-habitation with parents and major financial and status insecurity...He currently distributes free newspapers every evening between 4 p.m. and 6.30 p.m., attends courses to retake his professional baccalaureate and a free auditor and continues to send applications for jobs for which he never obtains a reply. He also mentions angrily the rejection he has suffered from temping agencies, which cited his lack of experience. In fact, Thomas seemed torn between the desire to enjoy himself and carry on teenage behaviour, postponing the time for commitments and responsibilities, rejecting the career world to marginal concern and espousing an instrumental approach to work, which allows entertaining non-work. On the other hand, there was the need to struggle to find a place on the job market and stand out from his schoolmates and neighbourhood friends whom unemployment has relegated to the rank of 'supernumeraries' (Castel, 2002) and whom in his opinion are identity counter-models.

Thomas and Maryse therefore began their careers with temporary jobs. However, a hypothesis can be developed in light of national statistics that the formal similarity of their early careers

conceals highly contrasting paths and subsequent situations. Although the transition to the labour market for the vast majority of young people takes place through temporary contracts, such insecurity has every change of continuing over the long term irrespective of the match between labour supply and demand for a minority of young people in the forefront of whom are those with few qualifications and a foreign background⁵⁰ such as Thomas.

Chantal's dissatisfaction arose less from job insecurity in the narrow sense of the term than from the lack of interest in the assignments entrusted to her as well as the small margin for manoeuvre and outlook for growth available to her to turn the situation around. She suffered from being boxed into repetitive tasks without the possibility of expressing her creative qualities. This rather disillusioned observation motivated her to cut down the number of hours spent at the office and content herself with fulfilling her contractual obligations until she could change company. Limiting her professional investment therefore fulfilled in her case an individual strategy to correct the imbalance between salary levels from which she suffers and offset in some way the frustration it creates. This behaviour does, however, cause conflicting relations with her supervisor.

Finally, Béatrice after having invested heavily in her work in particular by accepting costly reclassifications has been driven to develop a professional identity out of kilter with what her management has imposed. Following the changes in organisation and strategy applied by her company in conjunction with a younger employee population, Béatrice felt insidiously dragged into a process in which she is 'sidetracked' and her professional skills disregarded. This was a process she no longer hoped to avoid before retiring, even though she remained convinced she had not lost merit, she struggled in spite of everything to maintain a positive image of herself.

Béatrice's career illustrates a phenomenon broadly highlighted by sociologists in France: the exclusion of older employees deemed incapable of supporting the modernisation of the socio-productive pact in organisations owing to their assumed resistance to change or qualifications now considered obsolete or useless in light of technological progress.

The case of Béatrice and Chantal confirm that the feelings of dissatisfaction with work and job insecurity cannot necessarily be superimposed. The jobs of the two individuals are not threatened although their work experience causes mental suffering and social malaise and conform to what Paugam considers to be "laborious integration".

The four respondents therefore share a painful work experience in which the presiding feature depending on the case was a feeling of salary injustice (Maryse), professional frustration (Chantal) and social disqualification (Béatrice and Thomas). The apprehension about work situations was marked by a lack of esteem and even for some of ostracism, all of which are experienced forms of absence or denial of recognition, which convey a world of meanness but also a world marked by social injustice (Boltanski, 2003).

It would be too simplistic, however, to draw an exclusive mechanical link between dissatisfaction at work and the limited commitment to a career. A moderate investment in work is far from complying solely with one of the "forms of acting in situations of vulnerability [...] in a state of material and symbolic deprivation [...] in a context where

50. Lollivier S., "La récurrence du chômage dans l'insertion des jeunes", in *Economie et Statistique*, N°334, 2000.

confidence is destroyed”⁵¹. Some individuals may deliberately pursue a rationale of career divestment when they are intensely involved in matters outside the employee sphere. They are then driven by plans disconnected from their working life (Matthieu and Nicolas) which are not always developed as a reaction to a poorly developed or weakened professional identity.

Thus Matthieu explicitly stated his decision to maintain an instrumental relation with his job and relegate it to the second rank of priorities. His position as a trainer in a football club, currently on a voluntary basis, very clearly held a more important place in terms of investment in time and importance than that as a sales advisor in a bank branch. He also refused a promotion fearing that the new job would force him to spend more time at the office and would therefore be incompatible with his extra-professional commitments, which he considered the primary vector of personal fulfilment.

In a comparable approach, Nicolas stated he was globally satisfied with his job as an electrician and operator in a metallurgy company, although his job is secondary in terms of how he arranged time in light of his personal and emotional involvements. He expressed no desire to progress within the company given that the effort to rise up the scale would be too costly in return for the expected benefits. The slow rate of progress by his older colleagues was an unappealing career model rather than a motivating source of stimulation. In fact, he planned to become self-employed and open a car workshop. An entrepreneurial adventure was in his opinion the only form of access to social success.

An analysis of the motives resulting in limited professional investment by these respondents therefore led us to sub-divide this model of relations with work into two categories:

- “Dissatisfaction with work”
- “Alternative plans exist”.

2.3.3 Interviews symbolic of the “type”

a) *Dissatisfaction at work*

Maryse, 24 years old, single, without child, teacher of history/geography, temporary replacement job in a private high school

After obtaining a Baccalauréat (A-level) with specialisation in economics and social sciences, Maryse registered at the University in history. Her studies represented a very fulfilling period in her existence. But she next had to face the great difficulties that meet certain young graduates to get a job in accordance with their level of education. Maryse has therefore multiplied precarious and downgraded jobs. She eventually got in January 2007 a job of part time professor (6 weekly hours) in a private high school. Unfortunately the weakness of her income compels her to find, alongside to her activity as professor, subsistence jobs in order to obtain complementary remunerations for her survival. Although the precariousness she faces allows her to discover varied universes, Maryse expresses an extremely critical and disillusioned view on her position, and, beyond her personal case, on the weak profitability of the school investment in terms of professional integration. Considering the extent of professional difficulties that she meets currently, she plans to abandon a time the teaching job, a job that nevertheless gives her many satisfactions, to go abroad in the framework of humanitarian missions. Regarding the articulation between private and professional life, Maryse, if she has the financial possibility, wants to stop working when she becomes a mother, to devote fully to the education of her children, but also to be able to have time for cultural and artistic activities.

51. Châtel and Soulet, *Agir en situation de vulnérabilité*, Laval University Press, 2003.

Thomas, 23 years old, single, job consisting in distributing free newspapers (precarious and part-time job).

Thomas was born of two deaf parents. His career path is not linear: he failed a technical school certificate (BEP, Brevet d'études professionnelles) in accounting. He prepared the professional "baccalauréat" (or Bac Pro), but failed and decided to try again, but without affiliation to school this time (literally, as a "free candidate"). He then searched a job. When remembering his school career path, he has a feeling of failure. During these years, he has experienced a series of internships and vocational training in firms. Currently, Thomas distributes free newspapers "Direct Evening" in the street, every evening, between 4 p. m and 6:30 p. m. He considers that his work is hard (bad weaver, unfriendly people). It allows him to earn little, before taking again a professional "Baccalauréat" (A-level). For him, work is a source of income, a way of having access to leisure. Thomas goes to a training every morning in order to sit again the exam of "Baccalauréat professionnel". He is also searching a job, not exactly in accountability (because it seems too hard to him), but as data keyboarding employee. He sends many letters of application by e-mail, but he does not receive any answer. That's the hardest thing for him. Besides, several of his friends do nothing, they do not search anymore, and they are discouraged, because they never received any answer. Temping agencies criticise him for his lack of experiences, thus causing him quite violent anger: "that's like night clubs. They do not let me go into the nightclub and say me that I am not a regular customer. But how can I become a regular customer if they never let me go into?". He feels powerless in general, but in the mean time, his has adopted a kind of Epicurean attitude (living from day to day, enjoying the present instant).

Chantal, 28 years old, single, master degrees in the visual arts computer graphics artist in a small enterprise

Chantal is single and lives in Paris. After a Baccalauréat (A-level) in visual arts, she registered at the School of Arts (les Beaux Arts) in the graphic arts course for 3 years, in accordance with her passion. She then joined another school (Les Gobelins) in order to improve her technical skills in photography. During her studies at the school called Les Gobelins, she worked part-time as assistant at the cashdesk, in Castorama, a do-it-yourself store. She resigned because she did not want to lock herself into a job that she did not like. When she started looking for a job, she was not really afraid by the unemployment risk, but by the risk of getting an uninteresting job that did not fit her aspirations and that could leave an indelible mark on her future career path. Her present colleague, Philippe, is a former classmate from the school Les Beaux Arts. Gaëlle encouraged Chantal to apply for a job in a small company specialised in touching up photos, where she works. The company offered her a CNE (Contrat Nouvelle Embauche), a contract with unlimited term, with a simplified dismissal period valid for the first two years⁵². This contract was suitable for her, as far as she had a feeling that she had room for liberty, that she did not bind permanently her destiny to this company, without knowing if the job and the atmosphere were suitable.

At the time of the interview (about one year after her arrival in the company), she expresses a negative opinion on her professional life. She is disappointed by a work that she judged daunting and humdrum. Moreover, she cannot hope an improvement of her situation and opportunities for evolving inside the company. Lastly, she devotes many times to her work; her working hours are longer than the hours expected in her contract. But she thinks that her wage (the legal minimum wage) does not correspond to her efforts and the skills that she mobilises. She feels she is treated unfairly. This feeling has a consequence on her relationship with her supervisor, which is conflictual. According to her, this disappointment justifies her lower investment than her colleague Philippe who attended the same school, but who has more opportunities in this company. These numerous factors of dissatisfaction do not prevent Chantal from appreciating some sources of satisfaction in her present job. She enjoys the liberty of managing her working time, and she is happy to work in a relaxed atmosphere. These advantages were all the more pleasant since they were missing in the previous jobs.

Béatrice, 53 years old, married, three children, Vocation Training Certificate (CAP) in secretarial work, commercial adviser in a bank agency

Béatrice is commercial adviser in a large bank company in which she has worked since about thirty years although she changed agencies on several occasions. She knew, at least until 48 years, a

52. This contract is available to companies that employ less than 20 people. It was designed in 2005, by the government of Mr. Villepin, in order to boost employment in the small companies' sectors.

progressive career path. But for five years, Béatrice claims to have suffered a progressive process of “placardisation” (in other words, the firm has sent her down, in a uninteresting job). She has entered into what she calls “a semi-depressive state”. She appears totally disillusioned by the modifications in her professional environment, and waits with impatience the retirement, the only exit, from her standpoint, to break down the vicious circle in which she feels confined. This relegation, recognisable by a set of converging indices, seemed paroxysmal six months ago after the reorganization initiated by a young agency boss who has been landed on by the direction.

b) *Alternative project*

Matthieu, 37 years, married, one child, Vocational training certificate taken after the age of 18 in marketing and commercial activities (Brevet de Technicien Supérieur, BTS, Action Commerciale), commercial counsellor in a bank agency

Matthieu has worked for fifteen years in the banking sector. Alongside his professional activities, he is strongly involved in the football club of his city in which he undertakes, as volunteer, the function of coach. He knew a rather chaotic schooling path until obtaining his Baccalauréat, mainly because of a lack of interest for the school. This distanced relation to the studies is also explained by his passion for the football since his childhood. Encouraged by his parents he finally undertook without enthusiasm a BTS Action Commerciale (a vocational training certificate taken after the age of 18 in marketing and commercial activities). He did not meet any difficulty to enter into the professional life. Indeed the company in which he worked alternately hired him when he has not even completed his training. His function as coach has clearly a more important place, in terms of temporal and emotional investment, than the one taken by his paid activity. Indeed, Matthieu recognises himself to have a purely instrumental relation with his work, which he relegates to the second plan in the order of its priorities. In the future, Matthieu hopes to be offered the job of principal coach, and therefore becoming salaried of the club. Beyond the declarative discourse, several indices also tend to confirm that the personal and associative commitment of Matthieu in the football club represents the principal vector of his identity around of which revolve the other spheres of his existence and in particular employment. Thus Matthieu chose some years ago to change agency in the sole purpose of benefiting from time schedules more compatible with his activities outside work. In a similar logic, Matthieu refused to be promoted financial advisor fearing that this new position compels him to spend more time in the office.

3. Considerations on inter-generational relations in the work space

Changes in the labour market in recent years have increased the sensitivity of the issue of relations between generations in the company. One primary noteworthy point is the need to terminate the process of selective exclusion, which marked the means of regulating competition between generations in France for decades. The French approach, which did not necessarily apply in other European countries, was to have the weight of structural adjustments supported by the two extremes of the age pyramid by using young and older people as adjustment variables. This resulted in young people being boxed into atypical job contracts on the periphery of the stable employee core group and in older workers being relegated to zones of inactivity through early retirement. However, recently the relative recovery in recruitment, at least in some sectors, combined with the foreseeable extension of working life, is helping to ensure work cohabitation by different age groups, which had ceased to co-exist in the company.

Furthermore, the change in production paradigm, which increasingly promotes a flexible and matrix-based approach, also highlights cooperation at work and the use by employees or social and inter-personal skills as prerequisites for production efficiency. The area of prescription has withdrawn in favour of a requirement for motivation, employee independence and subjective commitment and relational skills at work. This does not always mean, as

shown by many researchers, a radical break with assumptions from the Taylorian model, although it contributes in every case to updating ideas on new forms of collective work in which cooperation is not limited to an exchange of instructions. It must also result in dynamic cooperation based on unscheduled interaction between individuals and sub-systems within the organisation and which can promote a sharing of knowledge and to resolve unforeseen issues in production.

However, a recurring trend in management and media approaches is to represent the co-existence of generations at work solely in the form of risk, a risk of greater propensity to conflict in social relations, which may compromise the ability to cooperate and ultimately have an adverse effect on collective performance. Individual and group interviews conducted for this research enabled us to demonstrate on the contrary that various relational registers must be mobilised to describe the relations established between generations as employees. These are far from confined to conflicts. They may refer simplistically to three discrete configurations (active cooperation, remote links and tension), which we will attempt to explain and analyse throughout this section.

3.1 Cooperative relations

The first configuration we observed is one of active cooperation between young employees and their more experienced seniors. (Such a configuration emerges from our empirical investigation as the most frequent situation.) This can apply to mutual help, occasional cooperation and more generally the exchange of information and knowledge between generations.

These harmonious and pacific relations stem firstly from the benefits each individual can draw from cooperative relations with employees from different generations.

3.1.1 Increasing professionalism and induction of young recruits

Most young respondents perceived their more senior colleagues as a useful and effective means of accelerating the process of induction and increasing professionalism.

The vast majority were driven by a strong desire to progress; respondents were convinced of the interest in cooperating with their seniors in whom they acknowledged despite the increased obsolescence of their knowledge, specific and relevant skills, which they did not at the time possess. Many considered the speed of their development, but also the optimisation of the employability for future external mobility as contingent on the speed with which they can acquire new knowledge and thus information gleaned from their seniors.

Me, I want to progress – that's normal – I'm at the start of my career and I don't want to get bored... This means learn quickly, progress quickly... and to do that, there's much to gain from more experienced colleagues; they can save us time. (Nathalie, 27, studies manager in the finance division, insurance company)

Although a thorough understanding of tasks and the professional environment can be acquired in part from individual comparison of concrete working situations using an iterative mechanism of trial and error, the incorporation of new knowledge depends greatly on proximity socialisation, which takes place in the group through direct contact with

experienced employees. “The unit of belonging is the main reference for socialisation in which the new arrival assimilates values, usage and norms of behaviour” (Iazykoff, 2007).

Experienced employees with whom new recruits work possess different types of knowledge which can help identify oneself in the company, manage stress, organise time and accomplish requested work. This may include knowledge, which transcends formal description and which is occasionally developed on the periphery (or even in contrast with) official systems for acknowledging skills. There can also be a distinction between professional knowledge arising from applying a business (technical skills, “tips and tricks”, personal short-cuts, practical knowledge and procedural information) and knowledge more related to the history of the company and the operation of a department. These concern both knowledge of informal rules, networks of power and information distribution and the handling of cultural and relational codes.

Well, they know who to contact in the company, who and how to talk to, to get something, which department you should approach to make things go faster without necessarily following official channels (Chloée, 25, desk manager, company specialising in vehicle leasing)

Seniors can therefore play a major role in increasing the professionalism of new recruits.

Here are many of us wanting to progress and there aren't many places, so you have to stand out, learn quickly and faster than the others. You have to get tricks instantly. That means that it's clear if you're lucky to have good management from a senior and make the most of everything he can tell you, you've got a better chance at becoming good at your job, getting yourself notices and climbing up or at least moving. (Nathalie, 27, studies manager, financial division, insurance company)

As highlighted by the testimony from this respondent, the point of view expressed by young people entails not only considering their relations with seniors as systems in the present, for which the interplay is mostly at a given instant or relatively stable. It also entails rethinking relations in ‘crossing’ terms depending on how they see themselves progressing within the company. Here, we approach the analysis by Hatzfeld who states that “representation by [employees] of their own career is a vital measurement in judging systems and networks and helps establish the place and action they define for themselves. In this sense, although the organisation determines and limits a field of possible factors and constraints for an actor, the actor works within the organisation according to the vision s/he has of his own path within it”⁵³. Understanding how forms of understanding of seniors are developed by young people therefore assumes that the core of work situations can be penetrated but also at the same time that the weight of indirect and diachronic interaction can be assessed in the forward definition of the individual.

Most respondents asserted that seniors did not offer any resistance to imparting their knowledge and answering questions put to them. More often than not, they spontaneously offered their advice without the approach being a response to a request from a new recruit. However, some new recruits acknowledged that to merit the indulgence and patience of their seniors they must first demonstrate their desire to learn, acquire seniors’ trust through an active and motivated attitude and prove their loyalty by obeying unofficial and tacit instructions from the group.

53. Hatzfeld N., *Les gens d'usine*, L'Atelier, 2002, Paris, p. 131.

The relationship of dependence with regard to those teaching the business helps forge a link but at the same time makes it possible to adopt behaviours which break habits and norms of group members unless the risk is taken (which remains possible) of being ostracised.

3.1.2 A benevolent and comprehensive posture

There are many young people who do not espouse the deprecating approach to seniors and even criticise the treatment they are occasionally subjected to in growing older faster.

Of course there are differences. Me, I can see at work that there are old people who are starting to get tired and are thinking about leaving and who don't want to do what is said has to be done today. But I won't say they're good for nothing and don't want to hear, as you sometimes hear management saying. Of course you can sometimes want given some people's attitude, but I won't spit on blokes I work with. If one thing is thought or done, it's still good to get the work done together and work quietly with them as if nothing happened. Besides, it wouldn't be fair; they're there, they do their job and that's it. Me, I can tell, I see them. And they're the ones who taught us those useful tips. Basically, I get annoyed when I hear that you might as well chuck the old guys away considering that they've been working there 30 or 40 years. I think it lacks respect. I can see my parents in their place and I'd be pissed off to have them feel that way. (Nicolas, 27, electrician and operator, metal company)

The above extract perfectly condenses the complex and confusing justifications to be found in various interviews explaining the reticence felt by young people in duplicating the negative stereotypes about older employees even though they occasionally admit to do so. A first form of justification refers to functional considerations relating to the requirement to cooperate imposed by working together. Young people measure how hostile remarks about seniors – especially if not made openly in front of them – can affect production efficiency; they perceive how cooperation, far from being a mechanical aspect of organisation, is contingent on the will of the parties involved and on the possibility of establishing inter-subjective relations based on trust.

The superficial rationales in young peoples' approaches therefore stem basically from moral concerns relating to forms of loyalty. The register of ethics to which we often erroneously believe young people are impervious is used in several directions. Firstly, respondents justifying the credibility of their point of view put forwards daily proximity with their seniors and want to restore a truth that has been abused by management rhetoric. In their opinion, management unfairly helps denigrate the behaviour of seniors who are assumed to be hostile to change, disinterested and opposed to any form of questioning and/or depreciate the value of their skills as being archaic for current production systems. The desire demonstrated by young people to restore the image conveyed by seniors and exercise their critical distancing abilities with regard to dominant management categorisations which are deemed negative also stem from the feeling of recognition for those from whom they have learnt the "tools of the trade". The respect, which should be shown to seniors, is also echoed in the respect they would like shown to their parents.

The concern to do justice to their seniors and at the same time to compensate for the deprecation they receive within the company result in a comprehensive attitude towards them. Most young people asked to mention points during the interview on which they differ from seniors systematically and spontaneously associate the reference to this distance with a list of reasons, which can explain it. Everything occurs as if entering a mental age of seniors and restating the reasons justifying their behaviour (which they do not necessarily espouse) would attenuate the criticism, which is likely to arise. This attitude was particularly perceptible in

two specific occasions which we will examine in turn: in industrial environments when young people mention the low professional motivation of some of their seniors and in the service industry when young people relate seniors' reticence in integrating new business directions and the company's new strategic position.

A few young operators, for example, stated that they had seen a deterioration in professional involvement investment by seniors at the end of their careers, although this decline attributed to time was presented as justified for individuals close to retirement and physically tired given the difficult working conditions they experienced during their careers.

We want more, we're fresh. Some old people have lost motivation, which is certain, there's a degree of negligence...but I say they're right and that you have to understand them; they've been working for 46 years and are getting to the end of their careers after slaving away all their lives in very tough jobs. All they want is to leave and you have to understand them. (Nicolas, 27, electrician and operator, metal company)

In a comparable approach, young respondents are mostly perfectly aware that integration and professional socialisation by their seniors took place in a company which differed in many ways from where they work today and therefore understand that seniors are reticent about changing their habits to comply with current requirements and adapt to changes which have considerably increased in pace in recent years.

*Have you noted conflict between generations?
No, I believe we're welcomed when we're young. Well, for me there wasn't... maybe at work level a way of thinking. Admittedly when you've got colleagues who've been there for 30 years and have seen things change you can seem a little less aggressive in sales terms, but that's all change. We were like that and it's always been that way...Even so, when you look at the changes, older colleagues can sometimes...*

And do you feel that there has been a clear change towards a more commercial focus in the company compared to before?

I've been told so. I've been here for two years so it's always been that way. There have always been the same goals even though it's become more obvious with the bonus system but apparently there was a time when it was completely different, now there's genuine competition with other banks and market share to be captured. It's therefore aggressive communication. Me, I've always known this so I'm not bothered, but perhaps if I'd known the period before like the old guys, I'd find it tougher, which is normal. Some of them are overloaded but everything changed for them: IT, products, the spirit. I don't criticise those people. I understand them completely! It's hard to change habits. Smaller changes make the pill less bitter to swallow. When you go very, very quickly it's normal what's happening... I felt that those who came in before me must have found it very tough.

Some people therefore mention divergences with older employees but mostly refuse to take up these differences to make virulent judgements, which would be openly accusing or deliberately aggressive about them. This is what appears to be their inclination to remove themselves from the management approach with a benevolent and sympathetic approach in outlining these issues of dissociation.

Similarly, older employees may point out the lack of professional conscience and propensity for work in young people but generally adopt a clearly comprehensive position and also mention the reasons which might explain this: errors in director in the educational system, a difficult labour market for beginners, the gradual collapse of the salary relationship and of possibilities for internal promotion.

You've got young people and it's a catastrophe at work, but it's normal, that's what they wanted; they were forced into a field on the premise that they weren't good at school so we shouldn't be surprised they don't feel in their right place. (Antoine, 47, multi-purpose mechanic, water company)

3.1.3 Training beginners: a gratifying task for employees with experience

Although inter-generational cooperation is an asset when integrating young people, the transmission of know-how can, in addition, be meaningful and a source of gratification for older people, providing them with the opportunity to give their itinerary global coherence, put a value on their experience by sharing it with others (Gautié, Guillemard, 2004) and achieve social and symbolic recognition in compensation for the somewhat negative image of their situation as seniors; providing of course that this role of transmitter is recognised and is not seen as a prerequisite to eviction or an elegant form of the scrapheap. Hence, many seniors, to whom the function of “guide” gives an elevated feeling of usefulness (“*it is gratifying for us to pass on our know-how, to demonstrate little tricks, the easiest way to do things*”), say they want to communicate their knowledge to younger people and in this way complete the circle of their professional life: “*learning, applying and transmitting. In a professional life, you go through several stages and you shouldn't hurry things*”.

The desire to pass on their knowledge seen in experienced employees is in contrast to the situation which many of them went through when they first began their professional career. Many found themselves completely left alone, obliged to manage by themselves with no specific accompaniment; this situation furthermore resulted in a “natural” selection between those employees who managed to keep their heads above water and the others:

It really was a crocodile-infested swamp at the time. No one looked after us, supervised us or helped us. Today, young people are really mollycoddled, it was hard at the time; many couldn't stand it and fell by the way. (Marc, 55, HRD, Road haulage company)

Some seniors, referring to their early days at work, think back on this integration phase as a painful period because of the defensive and hostile attitude of their elders who jealously kept their knowledge to themselves and preferred to keep beginners in ignorance:

I had to deal with old fools who wouldn't pass on their knowledge. When they dismantled the motors, i.e. the most interesting moment, when you learn most of the tricks of the trade, they sent me to look for the oil. These guys kept their booklets in their pockets with all the important information we had to know. Because they wanted to stay indispensable, they wouldn't teach us anything or unveil their secrets in order to remain on top of the pile. And some of them had really slaved to learn the job, so they said there was no reason to make it easy for us. They'll have to sweat just like I did. (Jean-Luc, 50, mechanic, Water company)

In a few decades, the situation has changed profoundly, firstly because of a change in the mentality of employees, and secondly, due to an awareness by managers of the need to attract and develop the loyalty of young workers but also to retain key competence despite the departure of older workers. We should not forget that the relative breakdown of hierarchical and statutory barriers, the change of pyramidal organisations towards a more horizontal and decentralised structure, the development of work via horizontal projects by semi-autonomous teams or even the inclination of management to adopt a more democratic and participatory management style, have all contributed to increase the value of the basic employee's worth by giving him/her space in which to communicate his/her knowledge. These changes have therefore contributed to the spread of a culture of transmission:

Before, there was an impassable barrier between management and the workforce. It was the engineers who systematically found the solution. The workers weren't asked to maintenance meetings. The worker was told: "Break down the wall" and that was it, where as we knew that it wasn't a good idea technically but no one listened to us. Now, it's different, particularly since privatisation. Only little walls are still standing between management and labour. We've begun to take into account the workers' know-how on the ground, to listen to them, to invite them to meetings and to encourage them to put forward their views. (Jean-Luc, 50, mechanic, water company)

In addition, the re-composition of the criteria, which subtend the management of careers within organisations, has also contributed to attenuating the propensity of seniors not to divulge their "work secrets". Promoting employees to managerial posts tends not to be so dependent on a criterion of technical excellence and more a function of management competence and team leadership demonstrated by the actors. Consequently, experienced employees less and less see communicating one's knowledge to a youngster as a practice, which could compromise their chances of promotion to positions of responsibility.

If you want, it's not like it was before. Then, someone who was promoted was the best technician, who understood the technical processes best. It was therefore in the ordinary blokes' interest to keep their knowledge to themselves and not spread it around. Today, it's more a case of asking a manager to handle a team, coordinating everyone's competence. It's more a question of group leadership. As a result, the guy won't endanger his career if he divulges his technical knowledge. (Camille, 56, Personnel Administrator, insurance company)

Today, experienced employees, at least a large majority of those we have met during our study, feel they have a training mission vis-à-vis newcomers and do it with pleasure. They have the feeling that they are "passing on the torch" and are contributing to the continuation of the activity which, in return, confers meaning to their own professional commitment ("If you show what you know to the newcomers, you know that this will continue, at least at all events we try to do what we can to ensure this is the case, and then, as a result, you can see you haven't been working for nothing"). In addition, they say they are behaving vis-à-vis newcomers like they would want their children to be welcomed in their company. "Passing on one's knowledge is a father's duty. I must train other people's children like some people do with my children, this is perfectly normal". Transposing a relationship is easier when there is a substantial difference in age between new recruits and experienced employees.

Transmission therefore represents, from this point of view, a tool which companies could use to make the end of career more dynamic, encourage seniors to stay in work and meet the challenge of extending professional life by limiting the phenomena of abandonment. This is even more so in that taking on a "training" function enables employees close to retirement to avoid having to continue in hard working situations and move on to a less difficult job (Molinié, Volkoff, 2003). This positive effect on improving working conditions and protecting health is valuable given a twofold development seen today in organisations: at one and the same time, a tightening of temporal and production constraints and a reduction in the number of "soft" jobs following the extension of mechanisation and automation of processes (Hatzfeld, 2002).

3.1.4 From transmission to co-apprenticeships

It should be noted that transmission is not always a case of one-directional exchanges from seniors down to the youngest entrants, "those who know to those who don't". It is often a case of reciprocal enrichment between employees whose initial training, work experience and relationship with new technologies differs in many respects:

The youngsters can teach us a lot at theoretical level about new processes for example because they've had a good education and above all at computer level because they were born with them. I remember a youngster who told me: "If you want, I'll set you up an Excel document and each time you have to change the dimensions, all you have to do is replace them in the table instead of having to create a new support each time". I said yes. And it really did help me; I'm working with this tool today and it really is a time-saver. (Fabrice, 49, CAP graduate, calibration technician, Water company)

Contact with the know-how brought in by the young can also encourage certain seniors to question the relevance of their own practices and to want to update or at least refresh their knowledge.

It's true too that, since we have to train them, this obliges us to look closely at what we do and sometimes to wonder if in fact we should be doing it this way. In addition, you have youngsters who have already worked elsewhere, if only for a course. They can therefore show us certain methods with which we aren't familiar. (Fabrice, 49, CAP, calibration technician, Water company)

This being said, this "reverse socialisation" is not always easy, particularly in the industrial world with its strong tradition of guilds, insofar as it may be perceived as querying the technical authority of the seniors, which have them a dominant social position. Such a drastic upheaval of the traditional order raises many reservations when it is not subtended by substantial HR and managerial support.

These forms of "co-apprenticeship" (Rouilleault, 2005), based on the complementarities of know-how of the different age groups, seem to be more prevalent in tertiary sector companies. Hence, a young marketing man/woman can offer his/her technical knowledge on new products to seniors who, in return, can pass on his knowledge of clients, their demands and their habits. It even happens, like in the bank in which we undertook several interviews and which has begun over the last few years a strategically more commercial policy, that young, newly employed staff, considered to be more aggressive, are asked by the management to pass on to senior staff their techniques for product investment and attracting clientele.

3.1.5 A social framework which favours cooperative dynamics

The peaceful and cooperative links between generations cannot be totally prescribed insofar as they depend on voluntary acts of autonomous regulation which are continually updated, rooted in a rationale of reciprocity, of talent/counter-talent. However, the social and organisational framework seems to play a major role in creating (or not) a context propitious to the introduction of these cooperative dynamics. We therefore tried, basing ourselves on the information collected during the interviews, to list the conditions favouring the triggering of these exchanges.

First of all, we were able to note that this active cooperation is facilitated when an institutional support such as guidance or sponsorship exists. This type of formal mechanism seems more frequent in the technical and industrial world than in commercial or administrative activities. They provide a reassuring support, which helps new recruits to settle into the company, to identify resource personnel and to define the perimeter of their professional attributions. However, the effectiveness of these transmission systems presupposes the presence of several conditions:

- the selection of guides on a voluntary basis;
- training guides, to “teach them to transmit”; an activity which requires specific tools and competence, in particular from a pedagogical point of view;
- the recognition and value of this specific task of accompanying new recruits;
- a “collegial guidance” and not a “hierarchical guidance” in order not to cause a confusion of genres harmful to the apprenticeship processes: *“the superior is firstly the person who evaluates, recompenses and possibly sanctions. Therefore, I don’t think we should mix everything up. It’s better for the guide to be a colleague to whom the youngster will speak more easily without being criticised or not giving a good image of his/her competence to his/her superior”*. (Marc, 55, HRD, Road haulage company).
- and finally, the slow move from individual accompaniment, with a guide or a principal referent clearly identified, towards a more collective supervision. The basic ambition is not to adversely affect global integration within the team and avoid the eruption of a feeling of suffocation for the youngster involved in an exclusively face-to-face link. The progressive substitution of a bi-polar relationship by supervision more equally shared out between the newly employed person’s colleagues may, furthermore, facilitate the passage from a logic of conformity or reproduction of practices, likely to contradict the imperatives for change, towards a logic of selection and co-construction of know-how of value to the company in order to reconcile continuity of activity and innovation of working methods.

Apart from these mechanisms, other organisational conditions should also be mentioned:

- Firstly, the mix of collectives and a relative equilibrium between age groups, which facilitate the comparison of points of view and, eventually, the collective production of innovative solutions and shared professional knowledge.
- Secondly, a degree of stability in the teams over time to encourage the establishment of confidential links, a prerequisite necessary for commitment in cooperative relationships and to enable employees to experiment in the field what they can mutually provide each other.

We were effectively able to observe that if the representation of young people at the very start of professional life seems to reduce the productive advantage of seniority, it is not definitively internalised, and may be reinterpreted, disrupted, even inversed during inter-active activities.

Thus, one can frequently see a rehabilitation of the value of competence in older persons vis-à-vis the young, who having worked for more than one or two years, have been exposed to “critical” situations giving them the opportunity to note empirically the skill of seniors, their oversight and their capacity to “*face up to*” extraordinary or unusual situations, to compromise with the uncertain and foreseen character of the action.

Well, OK, when we had a major breakdown, there were only youngsters around and, it’s true to say we were completely at a loss. This had never happened before and as a result we didn’t know what to do. Luckily, we were able to call on a senior to help; otherwise things might have turned up badly. He didn’t get upset, he fixed things calmly and everything went smoothly. (Nicolas, 27, electrician, metallurgy company)

In the light of these hazards of productive activity, young people can measure how much progress they still have to make to achieve the speed of execution, productive efficiency or personal economy before claiming to do work “of comparative quality”. This exercise often requires a certain time, all the more so in that, for example, in industrial companies, the ongoing improvement of installations and the growing safety of tools happily make the occurrence of breakdowns rarer but also limit by the same occasion opportunities to learn.

Although the stability and the mix of collectives seem to create an environment, which favours inter-generational exchanges, it is also the case with the easing of production constraints. Experienced respondents who have known contrasting inter-generational situations during their career recognise that exchanges with beginners are possible but only providing that the individuals are not overwhelmed by the stress of production aims.

This aspect brings to centre stage the major role played by proximity supervision in order to minimise the risks of conflict, facilitate the installation joint regulations (Terressac, 1992), and encourage the search for a compromise between group autonomy faced with the prescriptions and control imposed by the organisation for purposes of rationalisation. Hence, if one believes what the respondents say, the chances of inter-generational exchanges are reduced when the manager manages both to be involved personally and actively in the work of socially regulating the teams but also does not assume the exclusive role of transmitter at pain of encouraging some to maintain a backstage position compared with the group.

Managers do not always manage to assert themselves within units (some hesitate for example to use the stick and carrot method available to them for fear of adversely affecting the ambiance), nor to fulfil all their tasks (managing teams, individual monitoring of employees...), and even less reconciling the integration of new staff, implementing hierarchical injunctions, and complying with social norms historically established by the seniors. Their task is eminently delicate given, on the one hand, the difficulties which certain trainers, promoted on the criterion of technical excellence, have in entering into a more relational dimension in their role, and given, on the other, the extra managerial workload they have to face, the numerous monitoring and performance indicators for which they are responsible.

Some of them manage, despite everything, to assume a more or less discreet role of regulating inter-generational relationships by adopting strategies in their day-to-day management of teams providing an acceptable adequacy between everyone’s respective interests. These strategies can range from “delegating autonomy to participating in decisions on the functioning of the group, or internal alliances with the respective representatives of each generation” (Iazykoff, 2007).

3.2 Distant relationships

The second relational configuration that emerges from analysis of the interviews corresponds to inter-generation links characterised by a degree of “distance”. In other words, exchanges between the young and the less young in the company are limited in terms of both quantity and quality. We managed to isolate four main reasons explaining the production of this type of inter-generation interaction.

3.2.1 Effect of age

The first reason refers to what may be called an “age effect”. The differentiated positioning of the employees in their personal and professional life cycle is reflected in centres of interest and systems of reference that vary from one person to another. Employees tend in fact to create “natural” affinities with those who share concerns that are close to their own. For example, while people in their 50s often discuss retirement, young parents are more likely to talk about childcare or more generally the way they manage to combine their family and professional responsibilities.

Obviously we don't have the same problems. Older people are near retirement. So you often hear them talking among themselves about when they're going to leave, reform of the pension system, what they're thinking of doing afterwards. Whereas for myself and for other young people with the same profile, we're at a stage in our lives, both professionally and personally, where we're building things up, with all the questions that raises – how to make progress in the company. What to do about child care – I haven't got any children yet, but I'm thinking about it, so I'm interested in how other people manage. How to get the money together to buy a house. All that sort of thing. So it's true that can put a bit of distance between us. We're not dealing with the same issues. (Sandrine, 25 years old, HR assistant in a road haulage company)

3.2.2 Uniformity of groups

The second explanatory factor refers more to the managerial orientations that are prevalent within companies. Distant relationships may in fact exist quite simply when the different age groups are not physically present in the same workspace. This uniformity of groups may result in the first place from the management's preferred recruitment policies – thus the demographic composition of the workforce will depend heavily on whether the company has decided to increase or on the contrary freeze the number of recruitments in recent years.

No young people have been taken on in the last fifteen years, except for a very small number of highly qualified people to do necessary work or trainees or apprentices on really precarious contracts to fill in the gaps. That means there are very few young people in the company. It's a shame, but there's a logic to it. If there's no recruitment, there are no young people. (Roméo, 42 years old, manager / IT specialist in an insurance company)

However, the low level of mixed ages in some teams cannot be explained totally as a mechanical effect of the lack of recruitment. It may also exist in structures where there has been considerable recruitment activity but where the managers have deliberately combined their modernisation policies with age-segmented management strategies. For example, by grouping young people together, because of their supposed ability to adapt, in developing sectors and by relegating older employees, because of their supposed resistance to change, to activities that are on the way out.

By applying professional specialisation by age, an attempt is somehow being made – even if it is rarely expressed explicitly in such terms – to prevent the working methods of the older employees “contaminating” those of beginners by transmitting to them practices that transgress the new rules being laid down, as this acculturation would be damaging to the objective of using young people as vectors of change.

Many researchers demonstrate, however, that it is preferable to “avoid inter-generational competition that would make one generation (the young people) ‘winners’ and the other generation (the older people) ‘losers’ in the modernisation stakes; it is rather a matter of

aiming for shared management, adapted to suit the characteristics of the generations present” (Iazykoff, 2007).

Group uniformity is in fact likely to result in the formation of generation ghettos, and to generate distant or even potentially conflictual relations between the age groups since, firstly, the stereotyped representations of both groups are not put to the test by direct everyday interaction; secondly, the older employees may feel they are less important inasmuch as their experience is implicitly associated with a negative outsourcing that disables their capacity to learn and slows down the process of the renovation of the socio-professional pact to which the management is committed.

3.2.3 Intensification of work

The third reason that may be invoked to explain the appearance of loose links between the generations concerns the increase in the constraints of production, the intensification of work, and the functioning of teams on a JIT basis.

Let us take a look at the case of a large firm specialising in the sale of building materials to a mixed clientele of professionals and individuals. In one of the company’s branches in Paris in which we held a number of interviews, the organisation of the work was marked by professional specialisation by age, coupled with geographical segmentation – the three 50-year-olds were allocated to the quotations department, dealing more specifically with requests from professionals that were relatively specialised from a technical point of view. The three young people worked at the counter and dealt with requests from individuals that were more routine and more standardised. The person in charge of the branch wanted to change this spatial and professional organisation by merging the quotations and counter departments, combining the two teams so that the older employees could pass on their technical skills to the younger employees and teach them to deal with enquiries from professional clients in the building sector. The result of the operation, however, was less than successful; in fact, far from taking the form of more being transferred from the older to the younger employees, the reform resulted rather in a reinforcement of the professional specialisation by age. It was true that the two categories of players occupied the same geographical space, but in view of the pressure brought to bear by the clients and the hectic pace they were forced to adopt to respond to their requests, the young people tended to concentrate even more on the standardised requests and to refer exceptional cases and requests from professionals to their older colleagues who, to a certain extent, acted as “lightning conductors”.

This example is a good illustration of how much the joint presence of employees does not constitute a sufficient condition for a transfer of experience to work in the framework of constructive cooperative relations. Training theoreticians have indeed demonstrated that experience, especially experience mobilised in a work environment, is linked to time and depends on the person with the experience (David, Teiger, 2003), and therefore by definition partially non-transferable because consubstantial with the player concerned. Having said that, it is also known that the effectiveness of learning processes is dependent on the individual appropriation of the skills being transmitted. This appropriation, however, is neither spontaneous nor mechanical. It supposes not only the existence of moments of time devoted to reflexive exchanges but also real experience of the pertinence of the skills being taught in the actual context of professional practice.

The intervention of the company cannot therefore be limited to the arrangement of the physical space, and indeed not even to the constitution of groups with a mix of ages and levels of seniority. It must also contribute to creating conditions favourable at the level of everyday organisation of the activity (particularly by slackening temporal pressure) so that a dynamic of cooperation can come into play between the generations. These processes do not just happen. Inter-generation exchanges may fall into an informal category, but that does not mean that they happen automatically. It is important to make a clear distinction between these two dimensions.

3.2.4 Generation effect and differentiated relations in the workplace

Lastly, the interviews enabled us to highlight one last factor that may help to explain the looseness of the links between the generations, and this is the existence of divergences, in the working relationship, between young people and older employees.

Thus the commitment of older employees is often related to belonging to the group and the desire to be part of the group by adopting social and professional behaviour in keeping with the place the individuals are to occupy⁵⁴. In this integration-driven logic, the framework for socialisation takes precedence over specific individual characteristics (Dubet, 1994).

In contrast, the dimension of belonging that is preponderant among older employees is relegated to second place by younger people, in favour of the desire to be acknowledged as an individual, to not be reduced to a social role or allocated to a function in a company, and to affirm themselves as “autonomous subjects” in charge of their own lives, albeit hesitantly.

Thus we see among young people the affirmation of a “subjectivation-driven logic” (Dubet, 1994), and in correlation a growing trend away from the “integration-driven logic” that is more a feature of relations in the workplace among older people. This reversal may be imputed to a conjunction of elements.

While the younger generations are more inclined than their elders to be guided by individualistic logic, it may at first sight seem surprising to note that both younger and older employees, over the space of a few interviews, tend to reproach each other for adopting attitudes in the workplace that are over-individualistic and prevent the construction of links of solidarity and cooperation. When looked at more closely, these crossed criticisms refer to different realities, and are explained by the phenomenon that is well known to economists of “path dependence”; this is not without parallels with the “scarification effect” mentioned by Chauvel to register the marks left by a specific form of embarking on employment.

Older employees in fact are distinctive because of their considerable identification with the work group and a symbolic opposition to the hierarchy, which goes hand in hand with the experience of collective management of the workforce, combined with a qualification-driven logic and salary negotiation led by the trade unions (Dubar, 1991). In contrast, their approach to the work process is rather individualistic, reflecting their experience of the professional context that has been dominated by a piecemeal, compartmentalised organisation of the work, stable work teams, and clearly delimited jobs.

54. GIP-MIS newsletter, *Rénover le management en intégrant les jeunes* (renovating management by involving young people), issue n°19, January 2004.

We work fairly well together as a team. When there's a problem it's assumed by the whole team, not just by one person. It's a bit like a family. That's what you have to get the older people to understand, because they were really independent, they were in their place, they had their job, because it didn't use to be like that – before, there used to be one person for each task, but now everyone does everything.

What about the older employees in this new situation?

It's difficult, but they just have to get on with it, really. Particularly in the mechanical section – there's quite a lot of us, about 20. We manage to get them to understand this way of working, to realise that it can't be each person in his own little corner, but it's not easy. (Nicolas, 27 years old, electrician in an iron and steel company)

Young people, for their part, whose arrival in the company was concomitant with a large-scale movement of individualisation in salary relations, gradually identify with their peer group and consider their relations with others more on the basis of the constitution of “affinity networks”⁵⁵. They find being assessed on an individual basis, making progress according to their competences, or having the benefit of personalised accompaniment quite normal, whereas these practices were for a long time rejected by the trade union organisations and are still suspect in their eyes. On the other hand, young people express a cooperative vision of the productive activity that is coherent with contemporary transformations in the organisation of work (competence-driven logic, decompartmentalisation of units, work as a network, etc).

Thus, rather than opposing the “individualism” of the youngest employees and the “solidarity-based orientation” of the older employees, we may distinguish between the “cooperative individualism” of the youngest employees and the “individualistic community spirit” of the older employees⁵⁶. These different modes of individual / collective articulation, which are rooted to a large extent in heterogeneous professional socialisation processes connected with the time of entering the organisation (Troadek, 2002), may therefore contribute to producing loose relations between the generations occupying the same workplace.

From a comparable point of view, the tendency of young people to address their hierarchical superiors, if necessary by short-circuiting their immediate superior, and to maintain selective relations with their seniors may result in distrust on the part of older colleagues who may, moreover, see in the inclination of the new recruits to accept certain constraints passively a risk of their own acquired experience being questioned. It is easy to see how these differentiated ways of apprehending the work may generate feelings of mutual distrust and provoke distant inter-generation relations.

It seems therefore that the relations between the ages depend both on the context of action and the perceptive logic of the people involved. They rely on different forms of localised regulations, understood in the sense of (unstable) compromise between autonomous regulation and supervisory regulation (Reynaud, 1988). Sometimes these regulations seize up and give way to conflictual relations.

55. GIP-MIS newsletter, 2004, *Op. Cit.*

56. Thuderoz C., “*Du lien social dans l'entreprise. Travail et individualisme cooperative*” (concerning the social link in the company – work and cooperative individualism), in *Revue française de sociologie*, XXXVI, 1995, pp. 325-354. Delay, 2005.

3.3 Conflictual relations

The last configuration, much less frequent than the preceding ones if we are to believe our respondents, refers to the tensions that occasionally occur in inter-generation relations.

This friction takes a number of different forms – it is just as likely to be the disdainful attitude of young people to their elders as hostile behaviour on the part of older employees towards beginners. This is the case, for example, when experienced employees are reluctant to act as the transmitter of experience or the agent for the socialisation and professionalisation of new recruits.

3.3.1 A lack of recognition that produces inter-generation tension

The roots of tension lie more often not in a conflict of values, contrary to the underlying reasons indicated by an essentialist or culture-based reading of inter-generation relations, but rather in a painful experience of the professional and organisational environment. In general, in fact, tension appears between players who are suffering (or who are afraid of suffering in the near future) from the insufficiency or absence of recognition.

“By recognition we mean the intersubjective confirmation of an intersubjectively constituted relationship with the self; in other words, the confirmation from another person of the conviction acquired by an individual of his/her own value as the outcome of various identification processes.”⁵⁷

If this confirmation does not take place, the employees – by a kind of ricochet effect – will be tempted to perceive the opposite age category as a source of threat and unfair competition against which it is important to be protected by adopting defensive strategies (such as leaving the other person to make mistakes, not communicating pertinent information, spreading rumours about him/her, etc).

What is the basis for this lack of recognition that produces inter-generation tension?

It is in fact essential to look into “the social causes responsible for the systematic violation of the conditions for recognition” which lead to the feeling of moral injustice and the infringement of human dignity and integrity, which Axel Honneth (1996) sums up in the concept of “social disdain”.

3.3.2 “Social disdain” of young people

For young people, this “social disdain” may be provoked in the first instance by downgrading, failing to keep promises of career development or even of recruitment, or the impression of an unfair discrepancy between the efforts they make and the symbolic and material rewards they receive (or hope to receive in the short term). Their experience of the professional environment is then dominated by a feeling of betrayal and injustice in terms of salary.

57. Reynaud E., “Reconnaissance, institutions, justice” (recognition, institutions, justice), in *Revue du Mauss*, issue n°24, first semester., 2004, p.181.

Some respondents are in fact reticent to comply with managerial instructions enjoining them to train new recruits precisely because they refuse to participate in a policy that uses young people as a variable for adjustment purposes by reducing them to atypical contracts.

Young people who stay for a year are bound to have hopes that we know in advance stand no chance, in the light of what has happened for the other young people who have already been through the system. So we don't always feel like backing the masquerade by training young people. At the same time we have mixed feelings – on the one hand, training young people is never a waste of time because it increases their chances of getting a job afterwards, and the fact of having worked here always looks good on a CV afterwards; but on the other hand, training them also to some extent means maintaining the illusion that they're going to be kept on, although I can't promise them anything. That can be very difficult, especially when the young person works well and everything is fine. (Agnès, 37 years old, HR manager in an insurance company)

Experienced employees may also consider that the return on investment of their function as an “integrator” is too low in view of the rapid turnover of young employees in certain professional branches:

We just see young people passing through, so it's a bit demotivating when they only stay for six months. Even people who have lots of energy end up tired when trainees are changing all the time. (Agnès, 37 years old, HR manager in an insurance company)

This phenomenon is also a contributing factor to rendering the employment relationship more fragile, and “the consequences for transmission practices do not seem yet to be particularly well documented or well understood (by managers)”.⁵⁸ For example, everything takes place as if the generalisation of the use of temporary agency workers does not create a need to alter the mechanisms for the transfer of experience and for increasing the competences of the young people. Yet older employees do not necessarily visualise the value for them in training temporary agency workers inasmuch as by definition they are not expected to occupy a fixed or durable position in the company. Whereas the fact remains that they are recruited to fill a gap or to cope with an increase in the company's activity and need to be operational immediately, since the purpose of their presence is precisely to fulfil an immediate need.

A lack of recognition may also manifest itself when the young people suffer from being relegated to a role of merely carrying out instructions, without benefiting from any autonomy in carrying out the work required of them. They have to comply strictly with the instructions received from their superiors and apply to the letter the working methods imposed on them. This very close supervision seems to be particularly intolerable for young people with a high level of qualification or who already have some professional experience. They may indeed experience serious frustration, provoked by the impossibility:

- firstly of being any different from the others by demonstrating their competences in a context that is in fact increasingly competitive, and
- secondly of capitalising the theoretical and practical skills they have been able to accumulate throughout their academic and professional careers.

Not to mention that the ability to apply reflection and adopt critical distance acquired during their studies encourages young people to identify even more clearly and lucidly the perverse effects and traps that the work environment contains.

58. Loisel F., Gilles M., *La gestion des âges*, Editions Liaisons, Paris, 2003, p. 67.

Lastly, young people may feel themselves insufficiently recognised when their suggestions are not appreciated a posteriori in the light of their intrinsic value but invalidated a priori on the pretext of their young age, which they then experience as a stigmatising attribute that disqualifies them in their interactions with others (Goffman, 1975). The age of the young people, in this case, is interpreted as indicating a lack of credible and pertinent competences that denies them all professional legitimacy. *“It’s true that when you’re young you’re not necessarily taken seriously, regardless of what you say or do – there’s a negative prejudice right from the start.”* As it is hard for them to conceal their age and thereby control access to the information concerning their “relative deficiency”, the young people, having been discredited, will try – to use the theatrical metaphor employed by Goffman – to control “the public’s impressions” by demonstrating their competences in the hope that this will lead to others forgetting the presupposed negative aspects of their age.

The relegation of young people to the status of learners is all the harder to accept when the new arrival decodes this as fear on the part of his/her immediate superior of losing part of his/her power. The newcomer is then, moreover, in an awkward position in relation to a rhetoric that consists of encouraging the taking of initiative or the formulation of criticism by new recruits, making use of their dynamism, their capacity for creativity and innovation, and promoting new generations among the actors of change.

It’s a bit complicated, really. At the induction seminar, the managers explain that the company needs new blood that you shouldn’t hesitate to propose new things, pass on your ideas, even your criticism. But in fact you very quickly realise that it’s not really possible. Well, it depends who you land on, but on the whole the boss wants you to do what he says and what the older ones have always done, so it’s not that clear. (Sandrine, 25 years old, HR assistant in a road haulage company)

In this way, young people find themselves at the centre of paradoxical injunctions that are hard to reconcile – they are being asked to bring in new ways of working but are not given the necessary symbolic and material resources to do so. They have to submit to the modernising prescriptions of the management but their integration requires them to form an alliance with their elders and abide by the norms of the group and the customs of the environment they are entering. In the face of the ambiguity of this uncomfortable position, they may be tempted to see their elders as the cause of their difficulties.

The problem lies, however, at least in large companies, more in the hiatus between the discourse of the managers and the practices of intermediate supervision than in the contradictions generated by the cohabitation of two management systems that are partly paradoxical – on the one hand there is management based on technical professionalisation, favoured more by technically operational hierarchies, which is based on collective management methods, gives priority to seniority and considers professionalisation through a cumulative learning process in a limited area of activity; and on the other hand there is the management of individual performance, favoured more in institutional terms by HR departments, which gives preference to mobility, formal qualifications, individual competences that have been demonstrated in the work situation and require employees to take an active part in organisational modernisation and not merely capable of integrating such change (Troade). In a similar vein, Flamant (2005) comments that the implementation of principles of poly-competence and polyvalence points to “a new concept of posts and their articulation” but does not entirely take the place of the former rules governing the technical dimension of the activity. In fact, “they fit into the pre-existing system in a contradictory fashion”. These managerial contradictions may affect inter-generation relations in the form of tension between employees of different ages and levels of seniority.

3.3.3 Disqualification of older employers

For the older employees, this lack of recognition that leads to inter-generation tension is connected more with a devaluation of their experience in the workplace. This is social and professional disqualification, and it can result from the conjunction of a number of different elements.

It may result firstly from the relegation of older employees to sectors that are forced to evolve brutally towards a results-driven culture or from their posting to areas of the job that are on the way out, with reduced numbers of staff, and on the outside edge of the company's strategic core.

The major trends in the company's evolution, at least for support functions such as IT maintenance, are towards sub-contracting and outsourcing. The first stage is what is happening at the moment – each job is being picked apart and looked at to see how the tasks can be simplified, industrialised and automated as much possible. The idea behind it is to manage to change a large part of these activities into services so that they can then be put in the hands of outside companies. So it's really in those sectors that are losing steam that the older employees get put; in fact some of them fear that they will actually lose their job. (Roméo, 42 years old, manager / IT specialist in an insurance company)

In the face of both a shrinking professional horizon and the idea that there is a time beyond which there is no longer any hope of further career evolution, aging in the job seems to be summed up for some people as a long period during which the routine nature of the work is likely to lead to a situation of declassification, measured by contrast with a promotion which would occur at the end of the career, like a form of a posteriori recognition of the experience acquired and the time spent in the company (Huyez, 2007). This unfairness is felt all the more intensely in that “for the workers, seniority places the seal on a moral commitment to fidelity, a form of expectation of reciprocity” (Ferrerias, 2007).

Natural selection is management's new basic technique. For example, your work environment gets changed regularly, either in terms of the team, the missions, or the IT tools, but you aren't necessarily given the training you need to be able to adapt. For example, moving from huge in-house systems to open IT systems – using a network. It's not easy for anyone, and perhaps particularly for the older employees. You have to keep challenging yourself all the time, without anyone helping you, and knowing full well that there is increasing pressure in terms of objectives. So it's really a constant testing. (Roméo, 42 years old, manager / IT specialist in an insurance company)

The older employees who have difficulty dealing with the successive changes being made (“you get some older employees who are treated like outcasts at the end of their careers and indeed end up considering themselves to be down-and-outs”) may develop deteriorated professional esteem and feel that they do not know anything worth passing on to their successors. But they may also be tempted to hold the newcomers responsible for the situation, an amalgam that is more often encountered when the organisational reforms (such as the individualisation of management tools, assessment and remuneration) occur at the same time as the arrival of large numbers of younger people, used as a kind of “Trojan horse” of modernisation. “It is then not the population of new arrivals that creates the problem but the fact that in the eyes of the populations already at work there the company takes advantage of their arrival to changes the rules of the game” (Iazykoff, 2007). In a comparable vein, a survey carried out in a marshalling yard (Flamant, 2005) shows how the thesis of conflict between generations conceals the real issues raised by recent radical changes in the work. This thesis “then appears to be a means of expressing (or refraining from expressing) the questioning of respective and relative status, the radical change in social and symbolic hierarchies and the conflict of organisation that governs these radical changes” (p. 226).

Furthermore, career management may, in those companies that are used to functioning according to an internal market logic, lead to the short-circuiting of traditional areas of mobility and to direct competition between experienced and younger employees to fill certain posts (de Coninck, 1999). This competitive environment is exacerbated by the shortening of hierarchical lines, which tends to reduce considerably the number of responsible posts with organisations.

Indeed it is interesting to remark in passing that this type of friction is more apparent between adjacent age groups – between the youngest and employees in the intermediate age group. These latter may in fact find themselves caught in the crossfire. In other words, they are gradually becoming aware that their position is likely to be threatened by the younger employees who may reach the less numerous evolutive posts before they do, while they feel there is a need to reconfigure their professional expectations which until that point had mirrored those of the older employees who are now close to retirement. They are afraid they will find themselves “stuck” in one place with no possibility of moving upwards because of greater competition for fewer posts, or of reaching posts that are “safe” and less problematic because these are disappearing as a result of the automation and the outsourcing of the activities⁵⁹.

In this climate of fighting for places, retaining a monopoly over the possession of skills then emerges for some employees as a means of curbing the increased insecurity of their social position and neutralising the threat – objective or perceived – that the new recruits represent to their future.

Apart from career management, certain new strategic orientations may also result in a devaluation of the experience of the older employees, and by extension push them into adopting hostile behaviour towards the younger employees.

What we see, for example, in both the banking company and the building materials sales company in which we carried out interviews, is a slide in core activity. Over the past few years, in fact, management has tended to place less value on the quality of the technical advice given to clients about the products and more on the strictly commercial aspect and on achievement of quantitative sales objectives. The job of a salesperson, much more than that of a technical adviser, is presented in managerial rhetoric as requiring not so much professional competences acquired over time, but rather sorts of individual pre-requirements – personal qualities such as dynamism, volubility, etc that are more spontaneously associated with young people rather than with older employees, in a logic of the naturalisation of skills. As a result the experience of older employees may appear to be obsolete or off the mark in comparison with the new orientations. This is also the case in certain industrial companies where the economic choice consists of discarding defective products rather than repairing them at the side of the production line.

Thus the definition and the social uses of experience maintain an intimate link with the matter of the evolution of companies in an environment that is changing from a technological and/or organisational point of view.

59. See more particularly Durand and Hatzfeld, 2002 for a brilliant illustration of this phenomenon through the emergence of the figure of “30-year-olds in balance” in the automobile industry.

The last element that is likely to result in the disqualification of older employees, and hence increased tension in inter-generation cooperation, is to be found in the actual organisation of the work.

This is the case of the standardisation and rationalisation of work methods. For example, in the company selling building materials, the market knowledge of an experienced salesman is going to be rendered useless by the standardisation of procedures that henceforth prevents him/her from deciding on prices or reductions outside a range authorised by the company's software. The employee may then quite rightly be tempted to interpret this signal as a restriction placed on his/her professional perimeter or leeway in negotiations with clients, and eventually as a partial negation of his/her competences.

Thus through its organisational and strategic choices the company introduces an implicit hierarchical structure of competences, and hence of the employees who have those competences. The age issue necessarily involves the organisation issue and the selective effects it generates.

Another illustration in a slightly different register is provided by the steps taken to codify skills (which often accompany the introduction of quality standards). These may in fact result in a depreciation in the productive advantage of experience, a dilution of the added value of older employees, and by the same token an increase in the feeling employees have that they are considered to be interchangeable.

Thus the iron and steel company in which we carried out a number of interviews has been confronted in recent years with a problematic situation concerning the retention of critical skills – the company is in fact having to cope with highly sensitive production processes, but job skills are essentially learned on the job, they take a long time to learn, and they suppose a confrontation with dysfunctions in the productive activity; but the industrial installations are becoming increasingly secure and reliable, which decreases the incidence of breakdowns and therefore reduces the number of occasions for learning.

Moreover, the younger employees, most of whom have been with the company for less than five years, will have to replace their seniors in the near future, as most will be retiring in two or three years given the two-humped demographic structure and the small number of employees in the intermediate age groups as a result of a long period of not recruiting.

As a result the company has tried to capture the skills of the older employees by asking them to list on sheets the operating methods and skills they mobilise in resolving breakdowns and to then pass these sheets on to the younger employees so that they can be operational more quickly. This initiative is not without its problems, however, as:

- on the one hand, some of the tacit skills are resistant to formalisation of this kind and can only be learned on the job, over a period of time, in contact with the older employees, through direct oral transmission (this is more particularly the case of skills to be mobilised in the event of a breakdown occurring – not rushing, analysing the situation calmly and dispassionately before taking action, etc);
- on the other hand, the older employees are not all willing to collaborate in this as they consider that their experience is being “raided”, that they are being dispossessed of their

comparative advantage over the younger employees, and that they are being invalidated in their role as transmitters.

More generally, three major trends that may be observed in the companies appear to us to be particularly likely to generate the disqualification of older employees, and they are perfectly perceptible in the terminological slide that has occurred in recent years (they are no longer referred to as seniors or experienced employees but as old people, elderly workers and aging workers).

Firstly, the durability of the mobility imperative (Castel, 2001), which has had the more particular result of rendering seniority suspect – formerly considered as a mark of professionalism, experience and maturity, it is nowadays associated more with immobility, resistance to change, inability to evolve, and obsolescent competences.

It cannot be denied that the constant restructuring of the productive apparatus and salary policy and the emergence of careers that are much more chaotic, flexible, and uncertain represent transformations that are all the more destabilising for older employees since their former career paths, combined with the rarity of the training courses offered to them within their companies, have scarcely prepared them for this movement towards greater precariousness and fragmentation of their career paths. Unlike the younger employees, the older employees have already adopted a ternary, standardised and hierarchical vision of the professional life cycle, and have the idea that growing older is largely correlated to continuous linear promotion.

It is nevertheless important to state, as various researchers have demonstrated, that the effects of these changes have not, as has been the case for the youngest employees, had uniform effects on older employees and have given rise to multiple strategies for adaptation and forms of commitment.

Secondly, the generalisation of a “revolutionary” conception (in contrast to a progressive reforming conception) of the change (Hubault, 2007) has resulted in a vast depreciation of experienced employees inasmuch as it has promoted a development model in which history is perceived not as a resource but as a cost likely to hold back the modernisation processes. This approach lays down as its ideal the fact of starting from nothing each time and therefore introduces a relation to age that is necessarily disqualifying. In this perspective, the necessity of change indeed supposes that the past is swept away through a succession of radical breaks with the past and this in turn encourages the exclusion of the older employees whose competences are considered to decline with their advancing years.

Lastly, there is a third tendency that is firmly entrenched in continental Europe, and more particularly in France – the diffusion of a “culture of early retirement” (Guillemard, 2007), provoked by the multiplication over more than twenty years of conjunctural employment arrangements promoting the early retirement of older workers. These age-related measures have in return indeed induced the phenomena of early aging and negative stereotype representations of the older employees who are presumed to be relatively unproductive and demotivated. These representations are gradually interiorised by the individuals, both young and less young, as being self-evident.

3.4 Inter-generation relations – multiple relational configurations resulting from a conjunction of causalities

Our investigations lead firstly to getting away from a conflictual reading of inter-generation relations in the workplace. The distinguishing feature of these relations is more their ambivalence; they are far from being reduced to a conflictual dimension, as witnessed by the strength of the links of solidarity and cooperation that often grow up between the different age groups.

These results in themselves question the pertinence of a managerial⁶⁰ and media-conscious rhetoric likely to precipitate oppositions rather than identify routes for rapprochement by illustrating the cohabitation of different age groups in the workplace from the viewpoint of “*generational conflict*”.⁶¹ They also lead to demonstration of the multiplicity of relations between the different age groups by emphasising the existence of a relational aspect that contrasts with, without necessarily refuting, the highlighting in the scientific analyses focusing their attention on the meticulous decoding of the conflictual relations of power in specific productive environments⁶².

It is not our intention, by encouraging the relativisation of an agonistic conception of age groups, to stray too far in the opposite direction and fall into a naïve, idealised vision of inter-generation relations in the workplace. As we have seen, these may occasionally take the form of distant or even conflictual relations between employees of different ages and different levels of seniority.

But, and it is this second point which we would like to emphasise, the data gathered in the course of our research encourages us to not confine ourselves to an essentialist or culture-based approach to inter-generation tension which, through interpretative short-cuts, tends to reduce relational dysfunctions to a conflict between the generations. It appears, in fact, that the tension between young people and older people within companies is less the product of cultural compartmentalisation or conflicting values, and much more the symptom of management and organisation models that are incapable of offering employees mechanisms for recognition suited to their needs and competences and possibilities for them to consider a positive future for themselves.

This observation is not surprising if we consider, following on from Honneth, that “obtaining social recognition is the normative condition for any communicational activity”.⁶³ Inversely,

60. *This things are generally presented, the demographic reversal is an inter-generation risk (...). Inter-generation cooperation could well henceforth be seen as a real exploit on the part of management.*” Flamant N., *Un introuvable conflit de génération* (an untraceable generation conflict), in *Futuribles*, n° 299, August 2004.

61. The approaches that analyse the interactions between younger and older employees from the ‘conflicting generations’ point of view are underpinned by a two-fold postulate: firstly, that there is a radical opposition of identity and culture between these two categories of employees, and secondly, that the irreducible antagonism of the systems of values would inevitably lead to the development of deteriorated relations.

62. *With the passage of time (...) an immense gap has developed between the mind-sets of old people and young people (...). The two generations oppose each other not only in terms of ideas, beliefs and values; they also confront one another in a system of power relations and in the representation they make of their own social value.*” (Béaud S., Pialoux M., *Retour sur la condition ouvrière*, Fayard, 1999, p. 325).

63. Honneth A., 1996, ‘*La dynamique sociale du mépris*’ (the social dynamic of disdain), in Bouchindhomme, Rochlitz, Habermas: ‘*La raison, la critique*’ (reason and criticism), Paris, Editions du Cerf, p. 227.

the suffering produced by a feeling of a lack of recognition hinders the inclination of individuals to enter into cooperative relations with other people.

Thus the hostility of some young people towards older people may be seen as the extension of a more general rejection of the work provoked by a painful experience of the professional environment dominated by frustration and auto-depreciation. In the same way negative, unilateral views are transmitted about young people by employees who are in a particularly precarious position professionally or whose position is threatened. The cynicism that some older employees develop regarding not only new recruits but also the company and their development within the company is probably reflected in a loss of control (Pollak, 1995) over reality linked to a feeling that their career is no longer “on the right track” in relation to their hopes or the careers of their colleagues in the same cohort.

Thus it appears to be necessary to inverse the usual perspective by apprehending lack of satisfaction in the workplace as a cause rather than a consequence of the deterioration of cooperation between the generations. In other words, relations between the generations are not an issue except in that they reveal the declining solidity of the socio-organisational system.

This certainly does not mean that it is necessary to deny the divergences between employees who are otherwise socialised in very different educational, economic and technological contexts, nor even that these divergences may not potentially be carriers of incomprehension and misunderstandings. It is however necessary to militate in favour of a rehabilitation of organisational responsibility and to dispute the validity of the attempts at naturalisation that consist of apprehending the perceptive and behavioural differences between age groups and generations as being pre-existing, irreversible, and capable on their own of explaining tension in an imperturbable determinist logic. It appears, on the contrary, that it is the company, through its broad strategic orientations, through its HR policies particularly as regarding age management, through the forms of supervision and work organisation methods that it promotes, that participates in creating the conditions for relations between the different age groups that are either harmonious or damaged, in exacerbating or relieving tension – in short, in using the different competences to set up a climate of competition and opposition or, alternatively, of synergy and complementarity, among the different age groups.

There is therefore no point in claiming to consider this issue of the cohabitation of newly recruited young people and experienced employees without having first considered three major problems in modern-day companies – recognition in the workplace, the taking into account of the multiplicity of an individual’s commitments, which are not restricted to the productive sphere, and the value placed on experience. On this last point, we mean both the experience acquired by young newly recruited employees before joining the company and the experience acquired by older employees throughout their working lives. Which supposes, unless we are to stay at the level of a profusion of incantatory expressions of position, carrying out a substantial body of work not only on the representations of the company’s managers, but also on the perceptions of employees who are not always prepared to accept differentiated remuneration indexed on the positioning of each employee in their personal and professional life-cycle.

Organisations have every interest in adopting an increasingly preventive logic and promoting real management of the diversity produced by different age groups (Guillemard, 2007), without which they run the risk of seeing the forms of inter-generation cooperation gradually

fade and conflict situations take shape on the basis of false “facts”. Knowing, moreover, that it would be extremely damaging to dispense with this lever of social regulation at a time when change is more frequent and more intense, at a time when handovers must take place increasingly rapidly and risk being increasingly random unless they have been anticipated.

4. Conclusion: Generations in the workplace – areas for consideration and challenges for the future

4.1 Analysis of “relations in the workplace” from the dynamic viewpoint

On the basis of this study, we felt that it was essential to analyse the relation between employees in the workplace from the dynamic viewpoint. The interviews in fact enabled us to highlight not only considerable inter-individual variations but also substantial intra-individual differentiations that show through the protean, complex and evolutive nature of the respondents’ relations in the workplace. This issue is therefore probably just as much to characterise the representations and behaviour patterns of the employees in respect of their work at a given point in time as to analyse their social and contextual foundations, as articulated the entire length of their path. Working from this viewpoint, then, we noted a number of variables likely to affect the attitude of the respondents in their professional lives. From our point of view, these variables may be grouped in two major categories:

- those that are related to the individual situation of the respondent (profession and socio-professional category, level of qualification, gender, type of contract, types of parental transmission regarding work, school career, professional insertion, position in personal life cycle);

Importance of extra-professional logic and “privatisation” of relations in the workplace

For example, we met two young temporary agency workers in an iron and steel company whose profiles were very close in terms of qualification and initial training but whose level of personal investment at work was very different. While one relegated work to second place in his priorities and considered temporary agency work as a means of prolonging his youth and satisfying his needs as a consumer in a purely instrumental logic, the other wanted to achieve stable employment with the company, even as an unskilled warehouse worker in what is considered a job of little value. The explanation for the different attitudes of these two respondents lies in their different positions in their personal life cycles. The first was still living with his parents, whereas the other was planning to set up home with his girlfriend in a flat of their own in the near future.

- those that bear the marks of the local context and the professional environment in which the employee moves (sector of activity, geographical location of the company, value of the post, demographic composition of the team, managerial policies, prospects for evolution).

Integrating organisational regulations to understand the workings of inter-generation relations

In an agency of a company selling construction materials wholesale direct to the public in Paris, newcomers have very distant and even on occasion conflictual relations with the older employees. In the present case, however, this type of relationship is not the result of an irreducible opposition of identity and culture between young and old constructed and bound in place upstream, outside the company, resulting unavoidably in the eruption of tension. These relations seem to be much more the product of organisational regulations, which, by setting up professional specialisation by age, contribute to creating the conditions for deteriorated, competitive interaction between the age groups. In fact, by allocating young people, because of their supposed ability to adapt, to activities that are in expansion, and by relegating older employees, because of their supposed resistance to change, to tasks that are on their way out, the managers, by segmenting management arrangements and work organisation, contribute to producing discrimination, promoting the formation of generation ghettos and, in the long term, generating a climate of hostility and rivalry between age groups.

These initial results thus encourage us not to deny the existence of differentiation connected with social origin and class habitus, but rather to postulate a displacement and a complexification of the lines of segmentation, generating serious intra-generational disparities in the everyday working experience. Contrary to current thinking, which postulates a radical movement of homogenisation and unification of the generations likely to smooth out social divides, we feel that the differentiations remain substantial but are built on renewed foundations. Consequently, we feel that the reinforcement of the heuristic pertinence of an approach in terms of trajectories is combined with a theoretical weakening of the exclusive account taking of the predictive role of the social classes for interpreting differences in attitudes, values, and experience among the employees.

The question that arises, through our interviews, is thus indeed to locate the action logic that guides relations in the workplace (the relationship to the activity, to the organisation's missions and policies, to the work group, to older employees, to the hierarchy, to privacy, etc) and to identify the determinations that underpin this logic in order to propose an interpretative framework of a systemic type to realise it. It is indeed a matter of moving away from culture-based, unidimensional, static analyses to grasp the dynamic of the transformations that are at work, to make out the mechanisms and the processes for elaborating the representations and expectations of the employees. We would then be able to envisage their behaviour and their aspirations in relation to the world of work from a constructivist viewpoint, as the crystallisation of a series of social interactions, and as the conjunction of a set of scattered elements and complex, multidimensional causalities.

The articulation of these multiple processes must, indeed, be considered simultaneously at three levels (society, the organisation, and the individual) in order to take into account both the competences deployed by the players to cope with destabilising situations, individual biographical paths for the inclusion of the individuals in specific areas of production, and the constant mutation of contexts of society of salary. Thus in the framework of this analysis it is less the juxtaposition of the objective and the subjective (by "articulating" the socio-cultural and economic elements of the relationship in the workplace) and rather the simultaneous consideration of these various levels.

4.2 Young people – a common basis of variable individual aspirations and resources and strategies to satisfy them

Being wary of the essentialist stumbling block that confers on young people an eternal nature and attributes specific to the age group and tends to ignore internal heterogeneity does not necessarily mean adopting a purely nominalist view of the issue by considering, to extend the perspective adopted by Bourdieu (1980), “youth” as a mere sociological construction disconnected from all social reality. Quite apart from the divergences and disparities among the respondents, in fact, we managed to identify a common basis of expectations and behaviour patterns among the young respondents (in part different from those noted among other age categories).

Behaviour and representations concerning the work environment – intra-generation convergences

These convergences, some versions of which we shall mention here as illustrations, were found across the interviews at different degrees depending on the individual and the structures of which that individual forms a part:

- attachment to the work environment as a vector of the construction of identity and of social integration;
- strong desire for fulfilment at work;
- polycentric conception of existence and relativisation of the hegemonic value of work, refusal of extensive availability to the company and desire to preserve, through an autonomous and flexible management of time, the personal sphere apprehended as the special place for personal fulfilment;
- value placed on the interest and meaning of the work, opportunities for learning, and room allowed for initiative;
- constitution of networks on the basis of affinities, grouped around common extra-professional centres of interest;
- “cooperative individualism” in the work activity and everyday social interactions;
- horizontal approach to the organisation and rejection of authoritarian, infantilising forms of supervision, promotion of new relational models structured around an increased need for explanation of directives and the line of argument in managerial injunctions;
- shortening of temporal horizons;
- valorisation of a career model that is discontinuous and diversified but secure;
- opportunist, negotiated and conditional commitment to the company, affirmation of a desire for an immediate return on investment, degree of professional satisfaction indexed on a short-term evaluation of the balance of the salary relationship (material or symbolic contribution/reward) against a backdrop of a strong demand for reciprocity and contractual and instrumental relations with the host structure.

These methods for apprehending the salary environment, which are partly specific to young employees (at least in the exacerbated form), are the result of the combination, in variable proportions depending on the person under consideration, of an age effect (specific position in the life cycle), and more importantly a generation effect (cohorts whose identity has been forged by the common experience of events affecting the company and of events that have affected society as a whole). Indeed the analyses show that it is above all the changes in respect of the social and professional environment in which the young employees have been socialised and which they now face that explain the emergence of significant differences between them and the employees born during the baby boom.

We are thus able to interpret some of the attitudes and representations of young employees, as indicated in the box above:

- at the macro-sociological level, as the reflection of the transformations that have taken place in the economic, social and cultural environment over recent decades (for example, the explosion of the information and communication society / the rise of hedonist values and of an ideal of authenticity, correlated with the development of a culture of the individual / the feminisation of society / the “destandardisation of work” and the erosion of the norm of conventional employment following on from the crumbling and weakening of the salary-based link / the crisis of anticipation produced by rendering career paths increasingly flexible and de-institutionalising the temporal structure of lives that is the mark of the transition to a post-industrial society, etc), and
- at the micro-sociological level, as behaviour patterns adopted in reaction to the changes observed in managerial practices and in the social and technical organisation of production (for example, the destabilisation of domestic markets and the erosion of implicit subsidies in favour of young people / the application of legislation on the 35-hour working week / the modernisation (with ambivalent effects) of organisations, the decentralisation of decision-making processes and the proliferation of “project groups” / the extension of commercial logic models in strategic orientations / the substitution of the competence model for the previous qualification paradigm / the promotion of a vision of the auto-management of careers and the replacement of a promise of a career by a promise of employability at best / making the employees responsible for results, and the individualisation of management rules, etc).

Faced with these major transformations, the methods of adaptation identified among young people, ranging from resignation through adjustment and acceptance to resistance, play a major role in the way in which the relationship in the workplace is constructed, changes shape, is transformed, and oscillates between forms of professional commitment and distancing. The interviews encourage us, in fact, to define young people as co-producers of the social environments they pass through, undergoing serious structural constraints but always having an ability to interpret and invent in the situations proposed to them. Thus the respondents should not be considered as merely passive receptacles of overweening forms of logic that are coercive and outside their awareness and imposed on them mechanically with a concomitant overshadowing of forms of approval, anticipation and individual renegotiation.

A common desire for professional fulfilment, and differentiated strategies to deal with the lack of job satisfaction

It seems, for example, that in the minds of a majority of these young employees the demand for valued work takes the place of the work value, in the sense of the acceptance of the need to make an uncomfortable effort. Most aspire to a close correlation of individual quest and professional commitment and as a result have an understanding of work not so much in the normative manner as a social or moral obligation, but more as a possible lever for making progress, as a potential source of fulfilment, that actively participates in the process of constructing the identity, through the experience of having an effect on reality. At the core of the line of argument on the meaning of work for young people lies the empirical discovery of a socio-cultural mutation that goes far beyond the salary issue. This transformation, which was perfectly perceptible among the young respondents, may be defined, following Drancourt and Roulleau-Berger (2001), as the substitution of the ethos of duty by that of personal fulfilment. However, these aspirations do not always manage to crystallise in the actual work.

The respondents have different competences and resources, broadly correlated to the commercial value of their diplomas on the labour market, to face up to the low level of fulfilment that some say they obtain from their professional activity. While the more “employable” ones (not necessarily those with the highest formal qualifications) have no hesitation in considering external mobility, the less advantaged are more likely to have adopted a resigned attitude and distance themselves from or contest the workplace. This attitude may take the form of virulent direct altercations with the management, a work-to-rule in carrying out their work, or literal observance of the hours set out in the regulations or the professional attributions defined in their employment contract.

These attitudes of passive resistance which take the form of deteriorated professional investment are often interpreted by the employees’ superiors as a generational reflex (“timekeeping culture”), although analysis shows that, for many young people at least, they do not reflect a spontaneous and immediate posture that the employer has to cope with that consists of refusing to make any personal investment beyond the prescribed task. They reflect rather a pragmatic attitude adopted after the event, in reaction to the lack of reward observed empirically. Thus certain respondents who had noted that putting in extra hours did not result in any particular compensation henceforth refused to do any overtime. Others acknowledged that they circumvented the rules by allowing themselves certain liberties with working hours to compensate for the perceived low level of their remuneration, thereby re-establishing the initial balance (contribution/reward) that was deemed to be inequitable.

4.3 Inter-generation relations in the workplace – a place for cooperation and transmission to be consolidated

The present context of massive numbers of employees taking retirement combined with the difficulties encountered in recruiting in certain sectors means that companies are having to face up to the risk of losing competences, and confers new acuity to the issue of the transfer of skills between young and old. This issue, although it is stated in managerial rhetoric as being a source of concern, is, however, most of the time, neither included in specific arrangements nor reflected in an explicit policy likely to promote exchanges between the generations. What is at stake is what successful transmission involves, and is most often

underestimated by managers, although it is urgently needed when experienced employees who have the competences that are of critical importance for the company are about to retire. The situation is all the more regrettable in that efforts of this kind have as many advantages for the employees as for the company.

In fact, while transmission remains an issue that is not often anticipated and taken into account in companies, giving an impulse to a dynamic of an inter-generation exchange of skills may, as we have been able to observe in this study, prove to be beneficial on a number of counts – on the one hand an increase in individual and collective competences, the retention of sensitive skills, the reinforcement of cooperative abilities and team cohesion, and on the other greater motivation for the older employees, an intensified learning pace for the new arrivals, and the stabilisation and retention of the younger members of the workforce.

Although the exchange of skills between younger and older employees may occupy the informal register, it does not occur spontaneously, and supposes that the company applies a global approach that takes in both the organisation of the work and transmission as well as the management policy applied by the HR department.

A first stage – and one that is rarely adopted – consists of capitalising the skills of the older employees, taking stock of formative situations, and locating and making a model of the key competences that incorporates the foreseeable development of technical processes, products and jobs. In this respect it may prove valuable to request methodological support from an outside consultant who, by definition, is not involved in the hierarchy or social life of the company. Moreover, this “compendium” exercise, if it is collective and shared between the managers and the operational employees, makes it possible to not be restricted to the prescribed workplace or to the skills set out in the job descriptions and listed by classification systems. It also promotes the revitalisation of the exchanges and the valorisation of the employees by the introduction of participative logic. It is then a matter of identifying the future transmitters and teaching them to transmit – in other words accompanying and preparing the “tutors” to carry out this function, which requires specific competences and tools, particularly in educational terms.

The company must also create organisational conditions that are propitious for developing practices of transfer and inter-generation cooperation. From this point of view a number of points deserve to be mentioned. Firstly, a suitable mix within the teams and a relative balance between the age groups facilitate mutual enrichment, the confrontation of points of view, and in the long term the collective production of innovative solutions and shared professional skills. Promoting mutual learning also supposes a relaxation of the constraints of production and greater flexibility in the ways of allocating tasks within a group. In this way, the employees have some leeway in carrying out coordination activities and are able to devote time to explaining the practices and skills developed in the work situation. This aspect pushes into the limelight the major role played by close supervision in the promotion of a genuine culture of transmission within the companies.

Let us remark in closing that employees will only commit themselves on a sustainable basis to a dynamic of transfer and cooperation without fear of being judged or of making mistakes if they are able to visualise the benefits that they may gain from it in terms of increased professional qualification and career development. For the company, this involves taking an active step towards a policy that makes career paths more secure, gives recognition for competences that have been acquired, and places value on experience.

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Chapter 4: report from Germany

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1. General view on the interviews – reconstruction of social patterns of work

1.1 *The sample*

The guiding principle in selecting our candidates for narrative interview was that of maximum variance. We therefore chose men and women in different yet widespread occupations, industries and types of enterprise for the interviews. The youngest interviewee is 21 years old, the oldest 63. The interviews were conducted with employees in typical “male occupations”, such as electricians and industrial mechanics, and in typical “female occupations”, such as nurses and clerical workers. The interviewees had jobs in large industrial companies in the steel and metalworking industries, in medium-sized service enterprises such as hospitals or insurance companies, and in small enterprises such as advertising agencies and IT service providers. Most interviewees work in the private sector, while only hospital and social insurance employees work in public-sector organisations. Interviews were conducted in the northwest and southwest regions of Germany and subsequently analysed; the interviews conducted in East Germany have not yet been analysed. All the interviewees have completed vocational training. Qualifications also extend to technical college, polytechnic and university degree level. The most prevalent group comprises trained employees with a medium skill levels. One interviewee is unemployed, another is in temporary employment and two others are employed with temporary employment agencies. Another interviewee works part-time, whereas all the others are in full-time employment.

The family situations range from single households, to childless couples living together, divorcees living alone, divorcees living wholly or partly with their children, or wholly or partly with their children and the children of their new partner, to married people living with or without children in one household. All the married people in our sample have children, and all the unmarried, non-divorced interviewees have no children.

The interviews were conducted between the spring and autumn of 2007. Most of the interviews could be carried out in the companies. An interviewer would meet an interviewee in a meeting room for a confidential interview lasting 60 – 90 minutes. The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis and recorded. A small percentage of interviews were conducted in the apartments of the interviewees, or in the university (90 – 120 minutes). We thank our interviewees and the personnel departments and works councils of the participant companies for their support.

Summary of Interviews

Sex / Name	Age Group	Education	Profession	Sector	Family	Child
M / Sebastian	Young	Middle	Mechanic	Wood Industry	Married	1
F / Waldner	Old	High	Draughtsman	Wood Industry	Married	2
M / ZF	Young	Middle	Industrial clerk	Metal Industry	Cohabit	0
M / Frank	Middle	High	Development engineer	Metal Industry	Married	2
M / ZF	Old	High	Team Manager engineering	Metal Industry	Married	2
M / ZF	Young	Middle		Metal Industry	Single	0
M / ZF	Middle	Middle	Production worker	Metal Industry	Married	2
M / ZF	Old	Low	Production Worker	Metal Industry	Married	2
M / Christian	Young	Middle	Electrician	Steel Industry	Coabited	0
M / Franz	Middle	Middle	Mechanist	Steel Industry	Divorced	0
M / Ernst	Young	Middle	Team Manager Logistics	Steel Industry	Married	1
M / Joke	Old	Middle	Electrician	Steel Industry	Married	3
M / Fritz	Middle	Middle	Mechanist	Steel Industry	Married	3
M / Ralf	Middle	Middle	Electrician	Steel Industry	Single	0
F / Andrea	Young	Middle	Office Clerk	Unemployed	Single	0
M / Volker	Old	High	Information science	Bank	Divorced, cohabited	3 own, 2 of new partner
F / Ingrid	Old	Middle	Nurse	Hospital	cohabited	2
M / Paul	Middle	High	Team Manager IT	IT Consulting	Lives apart	2
F / Julia	Young	Middle	Customer Consultant	Health Insurance	Single	0
M / Peter	Young	Middle	Mechanist	Temp work	Cohabited	0
M / Manfred	Old	Middle	Team manager	Logistics	Married	2
F / Tina	Middle	Middle	Production worker	Temp work	Single	0
F / Monika	Old	Middle	Administration clerk	Advertising agency	Divorced	1
M / Daniel	Middle	Middle	Customer Consultant	Health Insurance	Married	2
F / Maike	Young	Middle	Administration clerk	Health Insurance	Cohabited	0
F / BEK 3	Old	Middle	Customer Consultant	Health Insurance	Married	1

M / BEK 4	Old	Middle	Customer Consultant	Health Insurance	Married	2
F / Claudia	Old	Middle	Administration clerk	Association	Divorced	1
Inge / VHS	Old	High	Social service professional	Education Institution	Divorced	1
F / Annette	Young	Middle	Nurse	Hospital	Single	0

1.2 Methodological Considerations

1.2.1 The narrative interview

For collecting the empirical data of this research we used above all narrative interviews with socio-biographic character – focussed on the experience of work. Social patterns of relationship to work are deeply embedded in the identity of workers. They are structures of signification that are forcibly narrated by the interviewee when he tells us his life story. Doing this the interviewee is actually doing identity work (Ricoeur); in the words of Schütze these texts are “narrations of self-lived experiences that are next to the thematically interesting action: they reconstruct the structures of orientation of the factual experience in a large measure.” (Schütze 1977, p.1) “The narration contains implicitly a retrospective interpretation of the narrated action, that is why the narrative interview is particularly predestined to be used in a research on life stories.” (Lamnek 1995, p.71)

The narrative interview begins with a narration stimulus and is conducted in a “soft” way, the interviewee should never have the impression to be forced to tell his story. This does not exclude that he feels implicitly induced – by the narration itself – to continue his narration and to state full particulars of his story. These inner constraints of the narration are called in German “Zugzwang der Erzählung” (constraint to tell all the story) and “Detaillierungszwang” (constraint to give all particulars) (cf. ibd. p.72f).

The aim of the narrative interview is that the interviewee “narrates” his story, tells us his story and not that he reports facts about his life that we want to know perhaps too. Only when he narrates his story the mentioned immanent constraints – immanent to the narration – are effective. This all means also that the interviewer must not fear pauses, silences. He should instead – if the silence is really long – encourage the interviewee by non-verbal or short verbal (“hm, hm”) comments. If necessary the interviewer can – after the narration phase – ask clarifying questions in order to avoid misunderstandings and also put questions that provoke arguments – questions that are strictly avoided in the narration phase of the interview. So the narrative interview will offer the chance of an interpretation that is a complex reconstruction of structures of significations.

1.2.2 Collective hermeneutics as explanation method

As the methods for collecting empirical data with qualitative research methods with qualitative research methods as for example narrative interviews are rather well established,

the remaining problem is the explanation, is the interpretation of the generally rich empirical data, of the texts. The proposed solution to this problem is an adaptation of Oevermanns (1973, 1979) objective hermeneutics. The collective hermeneutic interpretation is a systematised scientific method of understanding a text (in the large sense of the word). It starts with an every day's reading of a text but penetrates in the different layers of the text – manifest and latent sense structures, subjective and objective ones – by the confrontation of the different readings of the interpretation group. So the group succeeds in finding the structures of representation in a text, which are personal and social structures, identity and social patterns of interpretation that are part, elements of identity and social structures in the same time. Social patterns of interpretation are social structures in the individual.

Collective hermeneutics is a systematically organised collective search for all readings, all interpretations which can be found in a text. Furthermore it consists in a process of comparison and selection of meanings, which is not possible in everyday life. The group seeks in this process for consistence between different readings in sequences, which follow each other. The more consistent a reading is the more probable is it that it will prevail in the process of selection. Therefore the process of interpretation must be a strictly sequential procedure. The objective of the process is to arrive at a consensual reading of the text.

The process of arriving at a consensual reading is of course a communication process of a special kind: the participants should aim at a communication ideal as defined by Habermas (1981) – open and free of domination. In other words – in the words of discursive ethics, of Apel (1988) – the group of interpreters should tend to be an ideal community of communication.

The process must be a constantly renewed reference to the text. An interesting by-product of this and the collectivity of the interpretation is that it implies at the same time a collective control of the interpretation, control by the group who does the interpretation. The interpretation consists – seen in another perspective – in formulating and expressing competences included in everyday's language and the knowledge of action rules. Tacit knowledge is made explicit. That means also that in principle everybody can do this, can apply this interpretation method if s/he follows the strict rules.

Penetrating into the structures of signification in a text we find different levels of meaning. These several levels are in general not clearly differentiated in the interpretation process but they can be differentiated theoretically and practically after an interpretation step.

The first level is the explication of the manifest sense of the text. The group assures itself of the manifest sense in confronting the spontaneous readings. Then the task is to transform the individual readings in a group reading. The participants must make the individual readings explicit and compare them.

On the second level we try to explicate the intentional meaning of the text. The question is then: What did the subject of the text want to say which also includes the understanding of intentions to hide certain things:

The third level is the search for the latent structures of signification. These structures have a social objectivity in the sense of existing in more than one individual – often in millions of individuals – and that means also outside the individual. These structures are called social patterns of interpretation. They can include orientations and worldviews and in some sense

also habitus formations. A pattern is a structure, which has a Gestalt, which means consequently that once you know it really you can recognise it seeing only a part of it. So if a group has reconstructed a social pattern of interpretation several times the group recognises it easily.

On this third level of interpretation it is important to use all the contextual knowledge the group owns, contextual knowledge in the sense of the context of the interview or the interviewed and the context of a structure of signification, which is found in the interpretation. It makes sense to use the contextual knowledge of a language as by example on rhetoric forms or on linguistic structures. But the contextual knowledge should never be allowed to replace the reference to the text.

The fourth level consists in putting together the readings you find and the abstractions you make of them. The interpretation should try to find possible mediations between unconscious and conscious motivations. That means also that the group tries to find how the unconscious conflicts of the individual find their form of movement in the social patterns of interpretation, which are in general socially accepted and so help the individual to live with them. The social patterns of interpretation do not abolish the inner conflicts of the individual but they reduce the asocial, isolating character of these conflicts.

Social patterns of interpretation are not arbitrary inventions of the individual nor are they a mere mechanical repetition of the interpretation offered by the mass media. They are the result of the practical confrontation of the individual with social, with societal reality. That means that they are the result of the ongoing practice of life and of the process of socialisation. The interpretation offers of the mass media enter in these interpretation processes but they do not determine them; nonetheless they reinforce existing tendencies and they can do so because these offers are themselves elements of social patterns of interpretation.

The interpretation of the texts aims at the reconstruction of the inner logic of the fundamental structures of consciousness. But in order to do so the group must make the heuristic supposition of consistency of the identity of the individual and the group must study the whole case in all its particularities. That means that in order to understand the case and hence the logic of the individual the interpretation must take into consideration also very personal sides of the text and i.e. also of the individual. On this way the frontiers between sociology and psychology can be transcended. But they are important in another sense: the interpretation group will penetrate in inner structures of the individual and it is a question of professional ethics – and of ethics in general – how to deal with them.

The ideal number for participants of an interpretation group is difficult to fix, it lies between four and nine persons. When the group is too small, two or three persons, the richness of the method is very much reduced, one learns to quickly the argumentative structures of the others and adapts to them, which is not fruitful at all. To have too many participants can be a hindrance to the necessary concentration of the participants. Native speakers should interpret interviews. Participation of a person with excellent knowledge in this language is no problem.

1.2.3 On the combination of collective hermeneutics and qualitative content analysis

It is clear that the method of collective hermeneutic interpretation cannot be applied to all 28 interviews that we made. That would take so much time that it is near to impossible to realise.

But there is a practically proven two steps solution to this problem: a combination of collective hermeneutics with qualitative content analysis. In a first step the research groups will interpret some interviews – for example 5 to 6 – with the method of collective hermeneutics. The result of this work will be a set of structures of the mind, which can be called social patterns of interpretation/representation and in the same time a thorough understanding of the individuals' subjective core structures.

These social patterns can now be used in a second step for a “traditional” qualitative content analysis of the remaining majority of the interviews. This has a great advantage that - different from the “traditional” qualitative content analysis - the core items for the analysis must not be found by the genius of the researchers but are given in the social patterns which are the results of the collective hermeneutic interpretation. Of course it is possible and even probable that not all interviews will fit in the framework of the already found structures of the mind. In this case the solution is also simple: the researchers must now for these interviews return to step one and do a collective hermeneutic interpretation with them. This procedure will probably enlarge the set of social patterns of interpretation. The experience of this two step combination of collective hermeneutics with qualitative content analysis shows that this combination is very exhaustive in view to the richness of the empirical material, the interviews, and gives the researchers a deeper understanding of social problems.

In our view the result of this analysis are just what we want to obtain: social patterns of interpretation centred on work and the relationship between work and life. Focussing the interviews and the interpretation on work we get exactly what we intent to get: social patterns of relationship to work. On one hand these patterns have their own history as they refer always to work under capitalist conditions; on the other hand work is changing in capitalism and this induces also changes in the patterns of interpretation of work.

1.3 Work orientations as structures of signification

Rather than repeat what has already been written in the chapter covering the theoretical framework applied in WP 2, we merely restate its key message that work orientations have two dimensions – an instrumental and an expressive dimension.

Brief mention is also made of the debate having begun with Goldthorpe's thesis, elaborated in “The Affluent Worker” (1964), that workers have a predominantly instrumental relationship to work. He corrected the thesis himself soon afterwards, however. Other studies assert and confirm this thesis of a double relationship to work (Schumann 1981, Geissler 1984, Zoll 1993). On the basis of our current research project, we can now confirm that the thesis of a double relationship to work remains valid, although the expressive relationship has undergone some important changes in the meantime. The main thrust of these changes is that of differentiation.

The “classical” work orientation is that held by a skilled worker, which does not mean to say, of course, that it is not found among other types of worker. The double relationship to work is manifested particularly strongly by the skilled worker and in many cases involves considerable effort to establish a balance between the instrumental and expressive aspects. A skilled worker's expressive relationship to work was usually a relationship to the *content* of work, and still is. The content of work has changed, yet the classical work orientation still exists without a doubt. In the past, special features existed within the expressive relationship to work; today, such special features are the rule rather than the exception. The changes that

have occurred are attributable not only to the transformation of work itself, but also to the transformation of the individual. These changes, which will not be discussed in any further detail here, can nevertheless be understood as part of the modernisation process, i.e. we can understand them better by examining the various tendencies to individualisation, rationalisation and differentiation, and many other such movements (cf. van der Loo, van Reijen “*Modernisierung*”, München 1992). The combined processes of differentiation and individualisation inevitably lead to a situation in which an individual can possess several work orientations that are mostly arranged in a relationship between primary orientations, on the one hand, and secondary or subordinate orientations, on the other. It always depends, of course, of the type and dominance of the most important work orientation. One example is the nurse whose relationship to work is essentially the classical expressive relationship, characterised by a love of good nursing care, but who also views her work simultaneously from a very different overall perspective, and it would be inexcusable not to consider this other perspective as well. The individualisation of work orientation has produced what must often be viewed as a specific complex of different perspectives. The scope of the present study does not allow this to be analysed here with the desirable level of detail, because that would mean our being able to examine only very few of the cases we investigated.

Precisely in those cases in which several relationships to work (or, more precisely, several *perspectives* in relation to work) are interlaced, the question then raised is to which group of work orientations the interview is to be assigned. This question can be answered by introducing the notion of a social pattern of interpretation – a pattern of interpretation is dominant when it influences key choices in life. This can be explained with an example. The person concerned is an immigrant who trained and worked as a shipbuilding engineer in Romania. Once she arrives in Germany, she is confronted with the decision either to take a relatively secure job near her family, as a draughtswoman in a medium-sized enterprise in Allgäu, or to move to the Hamburg region with the help of a friend, in the vague hope of working in her original profession. She decides on the job in Allgäu, not only because it is a secure job, but above all because in that way she can better achieve her goal of becoming socially integrated in Germany. As it turns out, she is successful with her decision. After 20 years, her career has advanced again and she is firmly rooted in her new lifeworld in the Allgäu region. Despite initial difficulties, she has succeeded in integrating herself in society.

Within the small sample obtained by our small study, we can identify seven dominant structures of signification as work orientations, and will present them in the following. Of course, these seven social patterns of interpretation cannot represent all the structures of signification with any exhaustiveness, but the dominance of one particular signification structure in any particular case is a result of collective interpretation. This does not exclude there being strong and weak assignments to the particular groups, however.

The concept of career as life course

By focusing on the life course, social science research since the 1980s has overcome its previously static perspective; research on inequalities, especially, has opened up a dynamic *Verzeitlichung* (temporalisation) perspective (Berger/Mayer 1990, p. 13). “Society uses the social structure of the life course to assign and legitimise inequalities. During their life course, people can stay for different periods of time in very different class situations. The average social status can vary in a typical manner for a certain age group, and the degree of inequality can ultimately change in the course of a life.” (Mayer/Blossfeld 1990, p. 297) Life course research adopts a dialectical perspective and interrelates the history of societies and the life

histories of individuals. (Elder/Caspi 1990, p. 54). The concept of life course thus embraces many different life situations. “Life situations, therefore, should at least be associated with different phases in the life course.” (Berger/Hradil 1990, p. 15) From the subjective perspective, occupational biography connects a sequence of life situations into key aspects of the life course.

Life courses are characterised, from the social structure perspective, by institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation. (Mayer 1990, p. 15) Institutionalisation and standardisation result from the differentiation between areas of life such as training, employment, family and retirement. Welfare benefits, and other factors such as the bureaucratisation and specialisation of social services, lead to a sequentialisation of the life course into clearly defined and demarcated segments and transitions. The life course regime in Germany is divided into three parts, a key feature being its strong focus on the employment market. Depending on the level of educational attainment, the first phase lasts from three to six years and prepares the individual for entry into the employment market. The phase of active employment builds on this base and is followed by the retirement phase. The amount of benefit obtained during the retirement phase is coupled to the employment phase. This role of employment as the key focus for education and the basis for pension benefits is referred to as the “corset on the German life course”. (Kohli 1985)

Since the 1970s, a destandardisation of educational and career patterns has been observed, accompanied by an increase in personal responsibility for establishing continuation at the transitions between education, employment market and the family, and is discussed as a process of individualisation (BMFGS 2005, p. 80). Although standard biography and standard employment were a prevalent fiction in the past as well (Osterland 1990, p. 351), destandardisation and deinstitutionalisation of the life course have become increasingly important due to educational inflation and changes in both economic structures and political frameworks. It is not only the institutional framework that has changed; so, too, has culture. “This primarily involves a decline in the formative influence of values relating to law and order, duty, work, achievement and love, and a greater role played by values relating to self-realisation, to experience and enjoyment in the here-and-now.” (Mayer 1990, p. 15) This tendency, identified almost 20 years ago, will be subjected to closer scrutiny in the following, with specific reference to work orientations.

At the societal level, institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation establish frameworks and constraints for life courses. A diversification of life courses compared to those of past generations can be expected, with increasing individualisation the result. These processes of social modernisation are centred on the employment market, which distributes social opportunities and risks via the system of occupations and employment contracts. At the individual level, people are faced with the task of integrating their life course with their subjective signification structures in relation to work.

In the following, we distinguish between cases involving an institutionalised life course, and others with a discontinuous life course. The majority of our interviewees had institutionalised life courses. We distinguish the discontinuous life course, as a contrast to the life course, because the discontinuity feature describes the life courses we observed more fittingly than individualisation or deinstitutionalisation. These discontinuities in the life course can be very different in nature and are further differentiated according to whether or not the individual in question has succeeded in coping positively with the discontinuity. We begin with the social patterns of interpretation and relations to work in cases involving institutionalised life

courses, before presenting some specific cases with particularly interesting discontinuities and ways of coping with them during the life course.

Classification of Interviews

	Instrumental work orientation	Expressive Work orientation					
<i>Life course</i>		Social convention	Social integration	Learning and career	Optimiser	Work / life balance	Vocational self-fulfilment
Institutionalised life course		Frank, Maike, Fritz	Karin	Ralf, Markus, Christian	Ernst, Sebatsian, Daniel	Claudia, Annette	Ingrid, Paul
Discontinuities in the life course	Franz		Julia, Anja				
	Peter	Volker					
			Andrea, Tina				

The table shows the classification of the various interviews according to our two criteria, namely patterns of interpretation and types of life course

1.4 Seven patterns of interpretation of the relationship to work

In contrast to an earlier study, in which we found only seven social patterns for interpreting unemployment and crises, despite conducting 160 interviews – a very large number of interviews for a qualitative study –, our limitation in the present study to seven different patterns of interpreting the relationship to work is relatively arbitrary. The difference to the previous study lies in our differentiation of the expressive relationship to work, which essentially gives rise to a very large number of conceivable signification structures. Despite this, certain basic patterns are repeated so frequently that a limitation to seven patterns of interpretation seems to make sense, particularly since these cases satisfy the “dominance of interpretative pattern” criterion. We present the patterns of interpretation using 2 – 4 case studies initially, and go into further detail by introducing the concept of life course and other transversal criteria, especially as regards the interviewee’s pragmatic or reflective attitude to the circumstances of his/her life. The question of generational relations and intergenerational comparison is addressed in a separate section (4.0).

1.4.1 Work as a means of securing a livelihood

In this pattern of interpretation, the double relationship to work seems to be reduced to the instrumental dimension. We can basically always assume a double relationship to work. However, the personal assignment of signification to work is extremely restricted, of course, when the person does not even start work, or when one job is replaced by another in which the person has much less interest. Due to this reduction, the instrumental reference to work acquires the status of a social pattern of interpretation in its own right, particularly since the “dominance” criterion is clearly met.

In the first case we present, that of Franz, the interviewee's interpretation is that it is more important for him to work in a large company, a steel works, than to work in the occupation he actually trained in (i.e. as a skilled metalworker). He makes no effort at all to find a job in a different company where he might be able to work in his skilled occupation. Instead, he is satisfied to be working in a semi-skilled job. It takes seven years before he succeeds in leaving his job as a furnaceman (i.e. a semi-skilled job that requires a very short period of training) and to work in the occupation he actually trained in at the steel plant.

His thinking is dominated by the notion that a job in the steel plant, i.e. in a large company, is itself a job guarantee that he would not like to be without. Franz makes no effort of any kind to work in his real occupation in a different company. The security of his job in the steel works is more important to him. Franz had resigned himself to his role as a semi-skilled furnaceman working at the blast furnace in the plant. He earned good money, and that was the main thing for him. Blast furnace work imposes enormous strains due to the dust and heat at the workplace, and also involves shift work. In the long term, therefore, it constitutes a health hazard. However, that is not the only factor that motivates Franz to apply for a job as a metalworker in the company, after working for eight years as a furnaceman. Instead, he is spurred on by an intense awareness of personal crisis. He has seen how quickly a semi-skilled furnaceman can be replaced by a different person. For this reason, he looks for a way of changing his situation, in the sense of improving his own job security. His anxiety about becoming unemployed is not justified, though. Franz is one of those workers who have been placed in the internal pool of workers within the company aimed at keeping them in employment.

He fails in his attempt to enhance the value of his own labour by attending classes and trying to become a master tradesman (foreman) rather than a journeyman. He attends vocational school for master tradesmen, but fails the exams. After 21 years of employment, Franz has still not achieved any stability in his occupation as metalworker. He is a male worker with an occupational identity as a furnaceman, warehouseman, unskilled labourer and metalworker. Because of his flexibility and versatility as far as deployment within the company is concerned, also for external companies, Franz does not even start to try and put his career on a new footing outside the steel industry. He has developed a strong sense of identification with the steel company. Career advancement means nothing to him. "Getting ahead or whatever, at the end of the day, as far as I'm concerned, it's a job where I earn my money, my bread and all that". Franz lives life when he is off work. This is also why he wants his working life to finish as early as possible. If he cannot retire at fifty, then all he can do is play lotto – maybe that way he can manage to retire even earlier. In no way would he like to work until the age of 67, so he dreams of a retirement age which he himself considers Utopian (fifty).

Franz, 37 years, living separated from his wife, no children, mechanic

After school Franz makes a vocational training as a mechanic specialised in processes. He gets a job in the steel mill where he has learned, but it is a job not corresponding to his training; he works as a melter for 8 years. He prefers the security of this job. Then he gets a job as a mechanic in the steel mill and repairs installations. First this is a fixed job, but then Franz is put in a task force group, which is doing all sorts of repairs.

Franz has made his peace with his job but it is not his dream job. But as he wants to stay in the steel mill he gets resigned and finds an additional argument for being content that he is no longer forced to work in shifts. Franz is reluctant to take further trainings, the negative

experience of trying – in vain – to do a master examination. But he criticises himself for not accomplishing the masters' degree.

Franz is marked by his identification with the steel mill. He has an instrumental reference to work. In the relationship to other workers he sees above all the younger workers, which learn, from him and elder colleagues. As for frail or decrepit workers he is acting in a solidary way, because he thinks: "I could be in their places." His dream is to win the lottery and then quit working. So Franz likes to drive his motorbike and play lotto. His instrumental reference to work is really dominating and impressive.

Peter's case resembles that of Franz, in that he has taken the first hurdle for entering permanent employment – namely completing his vocational training as a car mechanic. Yet his case is different to the extent that he was unable to find a permanent job. None of the trainees in his year were taken on as employees after qualifying. The question now is – how is a young man to respond to such an unexpected stroke of fate?

Peter, 22 years, automobile mechanic, temporary employment agency

Peter is a 22 year old automobile mechanic. After finishing school he successfully completed his vocational training at a communal company. Having completed his training he is not granted continuing employment, however. After a brief period of unemployment he joins the army for his mandatory army service, followed by a few months of unemployment. At the time of the interview he has been working for a temping agency for several months.

Peter has a lot of pride in his learned profession. With the choice of this profession he realises a dream, as he is fascinated by technology. Yet his description of the tasks remains one-dimensional. While he can identify with the practical side of his vocational training he cannot find anything positive in the training at school. Peter has learned the manual side of the automobile mechanic's work, but avoids the **theoretical** side of the work on modern engines and transmission gears. He is proud to have been trained at a well-known large firm. The non-continuation into a permanent job thwarts his expectations. Peter's faith into his expectations was crushed when the company got rid of the entire year of vocational training graduates. He feels a victim of circumstances. After finishing his army service he finds himself unemployed again. He draws up a contradictory picture of his search strategies on the job market. On the one hand he moves around aimlessly. On the other hand he does not accept the question about a talk to clarify things with parents or friends. His goal is a qualified job with an accredited employer. He is proud of his goal that he has "earned" with his vocational training with an accredited company. Peter has not acquired a driving license for trucks either during his vocational training or during his army service. On the one hand he blames the missing driving license for his lack of success in his search for jobs. A mechanic who is not allowed to move the vehicles he repairs on public roads is just not very attractive for most firms. On the other hand he sees the reason for his lack of success in his missing work experience. In the competition for jobs he sees his youth as a critical factor for success. His age serves as a label and signifies lack of work experience.

Through an acquaintance he learns of the vacancy at a temping agency. Peter is hired and has been working there as a packer for several months. He is working at several hauliers and warehouses and loads and unloads containers. He receives about €7.00 per hour and thus two to three euro less than he would earn in his learned profession. Peter considers his employment with the temping agency as a stopgap. He shows little determination to improve

his professional situation. He indicates that forklift drivers have better occupational chances and a higher income than warehouse workers. Yet he fails to consider the acquisition of neither forklift license nor the driving license for trucks.

Peter is a young man in an occupational and professional crisis of orientation. He shows a primarily instrumental work orientation. The expressive reference is barely existent, although he does care for the manual part of his work, tinkering around. The technical-theoretical dimension remains barred to him; he shows little determination to use his technical skills. Peter uses a limited vocabulary and shows a limited attention to his personal and professional situation. Instead of giving differentiated descriptions he uses generalisations.

It is typical for Peter that he makes no effort to master his situation with an active, individualist or possibly even collective strategy. He neither tries to get his driving licence for heavy goods vehicles, nor does he look for support from the collective, for example from the works council, the trade union or some other institution. It is regrettable that limitations of space do not permit a description of habitus formation. Suffice to say that Peter shows a “cool” habitus, one that seems to be very widespread among a section of youths in a particular phase between the ages of 15 and 30. The person or persons concerned pretend not to be bothered about events that really do affect them. He shows no reaction – on the contrary, he treats the matters in a cool manner, as if it had nothing to do with him.

“He has adopted a “cool” habitus, controls his emotions and is closed off. He gives little attention to his disappointments and injuries. His perception of himself lacks honesty. Peter realises recognition with distance. He lacks the self-confidence to attribute recognition and appreciation to his own accomplishments. He repeatedly devalues his performance and his own person. His perception of himself is characterised by undervaluation of his personality. This undervaluation is projected onto others and he develops this “cool” habitus. Peter endeavours to manage frictionless transitions between school, vocational training, army service and employment. He wants to move like a surfer from one area to the next. Hereby he considers strategies such as the simulation of illnesses, the avoidance of intellectual challenges and disciplinary demands as promising. He relies on hopes.” Peter’s escape, or rescue, is temporary employment. This temporary work is so hard that one would expect Peter to try and improve his situation. But even the opportunity he has to improve his qualifications (e.g., to become a qualified fork-lift driver) is ignored.

Franz and Peter are examples of discontinuous life courses. The discontinuity brought about by his not being taken on after his apprenticeship is not addressed by Franz. He accepts his employment as a semi-skilled worker, i.e. work requiring lower skills than he actually possesses. It is pointless to ask where he is supposed to get the energy from that he needs in order to free himself from this situation after eight years.

Peter, in contrast, “copes with” the discontinuity that not being taken on as an employee after finishing his apprenticeship undoubtedly represents by adopting a reaction that is typical of the “cool” habitus – he stays cool and does not let the matter get to him.

Both Franz and Peter lack the distance needed to acquire a reflective perspective on the experience they have gone through. Neither accepts any responsibility for what happens to them. Both are a long way from coping with events in a reflective manner. Franz tries his luck playing lotto, while Peter waits for opportunities, for friends and acquaintance to “pull him along”. This was how he found his job as a leased employee. In contrast to Franz, Peter even

has a network of friends and relatives who could provide him with support. But he neither uses this network to reflect on his situation, nor does he look for advice from experts. The “cool” habitus simulates communication, but at the same time excludes grappling with events in any serious-minded way. It is not possible on this basis to develop a rational strategy. The “cool” habitus plays down any emotional involvement and stylises the subject as the victim of a fate over which he has no influence.

1.4.2 Work as learning and as career

Making the labour power that a worker tries to sell as expensive as possible is an old strategy that has lost none of its importance, especially in an age in which continuing education and similar measures are propagated from all sides. That many employees choose this path should come as little wonder. In our non-representative study, the “work as learning and as career” pattern of interpretation is particularly common.

The rationales for learning differ considerably. Some have promotion within the enterprise in mind. This group is particularly numerous. Others aim for a career outside the enterprise. Certain jobs can only be achieved by learning assiduously. Yet differences in motivation only really become evident in the narrative context and with hermeneutic interpretation: the aims of learning may be directly associated with specific opportunities for advancement, but they can also be entirely derived from intrinsic motivation on the part of the employee: Learning can be fun, and the enjoyment can depend entirely or not at all on the success of learning.

More or less all of the interviewees mentioned in this section are pursuing the strategy of selling their labour power better by achieving promotion either in the past or the future. Other accentuations are made by the “optimisers” (see section 3.2.3) or the “self-realisers” (3.2.4), who are characterised by their predominantly intrinsic motivation for learning. One can even refer in this context to an employment career in which jobs are changed not for the purpose of earning more money or having more power over others, and not to have greater security, but because the work in the new job is more interesting. This, in a certain sense, is the essence of an expressive relationship to work. A work orientation of this kind is described in section

The primary focus here, in contrast, is on career advancement as the rationale for learning. Younger workers, in particular, are the ones who adopt this strategy; they combine the notion of a successful working life with the idea of advancement. The case of Markus can serve as an example here, where a dissatisfying work situation plays a role as additional motivation for learning.

Markus 21, assembly worker, single but with a girlfriend, permanent employment contract

Markus works on in the final assembly line of a plant producing gear boxes. He has completed six years of secondary school, followed by vocational training in the firm where he still works now. He is proud of being an assembly worker, but he feels the competition of much older workers who still work as normal assembly men. His qualification is better than his job but it is difficult to get a better job without more social capital. So he decided to take a different path – that of learning. In his free time he is doing vocational training to become a master craftsman. It is very unusual to do this as early as 21 years of age, but Markus already has plans for the time after his master’s training: he then wants to learn and become a technician, even an engineer. His relationship to older workers is difficult because he they see him as a striver, a careerist, whereas he has a good relationship to his foreman. His

performance is good, and he eagerly wants professional success. Markus has an expressive work orientation, but it is limited by the necessity to earn money for his vocational training as a master, even though he gets a little financial help from the firm. He wants to make a career and subordinates much to this aim. His good performance is a precondition for his career. His concept of work is dominated by learning - in the interest of his career.

Christian, in contrast, is satisfied with his current work situation, insofar as it corresponds to his qualifications, but he wants to become an electrical engineer and perhaps even study. Whatever happens, he plans to start a family. Since Christian's case will be discussed in greater detail in section 4.2.x.x, his case study is described here only in brief.

Christian, 26 years old, single, no children, electrician, permanent employment contract

Christian is 26 years old and works as a company electrician in a big company near Hamburg in the north of Germany. He has a permanent employment contract and lives with his girlfriend in an apartment. They have no children.

He leaves secondary school with an average school-leaving certificate. He wants to become an electronics technician in industrial engineering. He sends his application for this vocational training to several companies. Christian gets accepted by three of them and chooses a company in the metal industry sector. The marks of his final exam are good and he receives positive evaluations from his superiors. Due to collective agreements between the employers' association and the union, the company offers all its apprentices a 12-month temporary contract after completing their vocational training. Christian is the only one out of six apprentices to receive a permanent contract. After almost eight years as company electrician - at the time of the interview - he has decided to start a further training, parallel to his job, to become a certified engineer.

Christian is a reflective technician, characterised by strategic thinking and action. His identity is based on his self-conception as electronics technician for industrial engineering and the appreciation he receives for his competence, experience and his willingness to perform in the company. He shows an expressive orientation towards work. Christian identifies himself with his profession and his tasks at the workplace. Demanding tasks at his work he sees as personal challenges, showing a high motivation to solve problems. Responsibility and self-responsibility are natural for him. He relies on his individual strategies and at the same time takes advantage of the scope provided under collective bargaining agreements. Christian is focused on performance and success and spends a lot of time broadening and deepening his professional knowledge. He sees his professional expert knowledge as the basis for an independent lifestyle, not trusting the security of his job in the big company.

His expectations regarding promotion are focused on greater responsibility and rising income. These expectations collide with the cost-reduction policy of the company. Christian's expectations regarding different generations in the company working together are complementary. Based on his job-related expertise, he strives for symmetrical relationships. He capitalises on his professional competencies to compensate for the greater experience and power of his older colleagues and his superiors. His IT knowledge, especially, makes him a valuable employee who is fostered by his superiors. In his department, formal professional and informal personal relationships overlap. The trustful cooperation based on the mutual acknowledgement of professional competence draws generations and hierarchies closer.

Christian has a clear idea of his future. A satisfactory work life, professional advancement and plans to have a family are part of it. However, professional advancement has priority to the formation of a family. Through his professional and material ambitions Christian is bound to the prevailing institutions and rules of society.

Compared to the two employees above, one 22 and the other 28 years old, the case of Joke, 51 years old, is a contrast not only on account of his age, but above all because of the kind of learning involved: unlike the younger workers, Joke has acquired institutionally secured training in addition to his classical vocational training as an electrician. His learning is primarily learning through work and involves the acquisition of experiential knowledge. The question raised here is that of the acknowledgement and use of this knowledge, which in most cases occurs in an incidental manner. Mention should be made of the fact that the situation is different in Joke's case, in that his experiential knowledge is acknowledged after an industrial accident.

A serious accident at work leads a major turn in his life. Joke can no longer climb up the cranes, but he can plan and prepare crane work, and he can teach others. The company assigns him responsibility for both these tasks. As someone who plans and prepares work for others, he will probably acquire the status of a white-collar employee in a few weeks. Further recognition of his experiential knowledge can also be seen in the fact that he becomes an instructor in the "school for crane-drivers". The latter is not an official, state-recognised institution, but it is still quite important in that it provides instruction to new crane drivers. It seems to be taken for granted that Joke would become one of the instructors at the school for crane drivers.

Joke's career advancement is also reflected in the different way in which he can now manage his time at work. In the past, taking a shower at the end of the working day marked the separation between work and leisure time. The plant managers have now given him a mobile phone with which he can also be reached outside normal working hours, and can also make calls with it in the plant when there is something important on his mind regarding the preparation and scheduling of work. Without his previous transition ritual at the end of the working day, and endowed with greater responsibility, he also thinks about his various tasks during regeneration phases in his leisure time. The mobile phone is a material expression of his continuous involvement and responsibility within the plant. The end-of-day shower and his company phone are expressions of the change in Joke's subjective relationship to work.

1.4.3 The social pattern of interpretation of the "optimiser"

This pattern of interpretation has already been discussed in the sociological literature. Pongratz describes the optimiser as follows: "the source of motivation is above all the quality of processes – these workers seek a specific quality in the way they experience work, typically expressed in work situations in which they have to assert their own expertise when under pressure". ... "We refer to this attitude (...) as 'performance optimisation' because work performance is condensed, at one's own incentive, into a coalescence of quality of experience, on the one hand, and efficiency, on the other". " 'Performance optimisers' want to prove themselves within the work process and are prepared to exert themselves to an extreme degree at times". (Pongratz; 2001)

Our case studies match Pongratz' description completely; the optimiser wants to "get the most" out of his work. However, the underlying motivation can be very different in nature:

one person may have a very intrinsic form of motivation – his work simply has to be done well; another person may believe that work has to be carried out in a convincing way in the interest of the enterprise.

The variant that impresses most, that also seems to be the most widespread, and that can best be understood as subjectivisation of work, is intrinsic motivation: work simply has to be done well, in and of itself, regardless of whether somebody will evaluate it in some way or at some time. When this is the case, work is enjoyed. A particularly impressive example of this is the case of Sebastian, who is not a computing expert like many other optimisers, but a plant mechanic in the field of tank construction. Building a stainless steel tank involves precision work and very expensive materials. The job requires a high level of craft and planning competence. “The way it is with me is that I have to get right inside a drawing. When I see the drawing, the first thing I have to do is think myself into it for a while. That’s how I do things. It can even take ten minutes – that’s no problem at all. The most important thing is that no mistakes occur”. Sebastian takes the time needed to prepare himself thoroughly for the job in hand and to think through the various steps in his work in a concentrated manner. He actively confronts the challenges that his work involves, without external prompting. “Everything here is special. It’s interesting work, but not that easy”. “I actually enjoy the work itself, and that’s great, I definitely like it”. He identifies with his responsibilities and is proud of the enormous independence he enjoys. One might expect that Sebastian develops his love of work well done in consultation and coordination with the hierarchy within the company, but the opposite is the case. However, he makes a distinction between the work itself, as a skill, and the job of organising it. Sebastian has a very critical view of work organisation and personnel management in the enterprise. “I am very satisfied, very, yes, I must say I am, I mean I know how different things can be”. Work scheduling and material procurement are done poorly, in Sebastian’s eyes, and prevent efficient, i.e. professional and profitable working. The work process in the field of tank construction has recently been reorganised and the division of labour has been intensified. “Ten years ago, it was simply a matter of working on my particular tank, which I did from start to finish. I welded the feet on and did everything that needed to be done on the tank. The situation today is that you get a model grid and then you push it away”. Despite the greater division of labour, Sebastian accepts all the responsibility for the object of labour. Sebastian identifies with the work he does and is proud to be doing precision work. He enjoys delivering performance at his place of work. The bad working environment does not stop Sebastian from achieving a maximum level of performance. “Although he work here at a high level, I think six times over about how I could do it even better. The point is not to get more money, but just to have my inner peace of mind. That’s what I want. I want to try and do things perfectly every time”. Expertise and experience are the basis on which he lays claim to independence and scope. He takes the liberty of going beyond predefined stipulations from upstream levels that are hierarchically superordinated. To him, experience means having the self-confidence and the respect to ignore stipulations without having to discuss the matter and give reasons. At the age of 30, he has earned himself the status of an expert within the company, a status that gives him enormous freedom of action.

The next case study is very different in nature. Daniel is a customer advisor in a social insurance institution. By wanting to help his customers, he falls into a dilemma: he wants “to get the best out of it” for his customers, but is restricted in his actions by the social security regulations and by the rules imposed on him by the social insurance institution for which he works.

Daniel, 43 years, married, two children, customer advisor in a social insurance agency

Daniel got his job more by accident than by personal choice. He did not really know what he wanted, but there was a vocational training in a social insurance agency offered and he took it. Now he has been working in that institution for more than 20 years. After his vocational training he was employed as a clerk and now he has been a customer advisor in that social insurance agency for many years. Daniel is proud of his function and his responsibility. He works alone, but sometimes needs advice from colleagues, which is normal. When work was reorganised in the social insurance agency, he was placed in the advisory branch, where he wanted to be.

He needs a lot of general knowledge, as well as all-round knowledge in his advisory field and he acquired it. So his competence consists of that knowledge and that he enjoys communicating. Enjoyment and ability are helping him to deal with the emotional challenge inherent in his work: he wants to help people, but there are limits to his possibilities, limits made of laws and rules of the insurance agency. He identifies with the case that is exposed to him and he is worried about the limits of his possibilities to help. He fears the loss of distance and implicitly needs supervision in order to overcome this dilemma.

As far as working with his colleagues is concerned, he has found a good solution to a similar dilemma: when he observes difficulties or an error in their work he speaks with his colleagues without involving superiors. He contributes to a cooperative work climate. But he is left alone with his dilemma, created by the emotional challenge of his communication with the clients. His emotional involvement is also a resource for his work with the clients, above all when he gets positive feedback from them.

Another completely different case is that of Manfred, which will be discussed again in the next section. A couple of remarks should be made here concerning the differences to the other two very different cases described above. Manfred identifies totally with the responsibilities he has assumed. “Pride” is a frequently recurrent element in his narrative. He is proud of how his company has modernised itself. He is proud that his department is so important that top management would be unable to work without it. He is also proud of his company and sees the world from a perspective in which the fate of the company is the central concern.

He has several teams under him and is proud of them. This is where the relationship to shipping comes in. He sees his people not as a team, but as a crew. As the captain of his crew, he maintains a certain distance from them. One myth that he nurtures is that of achieving success despite adverse circumstances, and even achieving success because of such adverse circumstances. This kind of tough environment spurs him to on higher things. Manfred does not distinguish between himself and the responsibilities he assumes. Whereas the other interviewees distinguish between themselves and the work they do, Manfred is completely absorbed in his work. If he lacks knowledge that he needs for his work, he acquires it by learning in a determined and single-minded way. He is a committed moderniser.

1.4.4 Work as vocation and as self-fulfilment

Whenever a work orientation is not only widespread internationally, as a professional ethic, but is also discussed as such, the profession qualifies as a vocation. The expressive dimension already exists by definition, to a certain extent. This is not the place to outline such discussion

of the profession as vocation, so we will confine ourselves to the one prototypical case among the interviews that we would like to present:

Ingrid, 50 years, nurse

Ingrid is a paediatric nurse and has been employed since 01.04.1974 in a children's hospital in a small town in north Germany. She is 50 years old and not married. The fact that she has been working for the same employer for more than 30 years and also did her training there is something of a rarity nowadays. Ingrid reflects with pride on doing shift work as a paediatric nurse in one and the same children's hospital for so many years. In all her 30 years of employment, Ingrid has never aimed at advancing her career, to become a head nurse, for example. She is a conscientious person with a sense of responsibility who gains her self-esteem from a practical work orientation. Ingrid wants to do her work as a paediatric nurse well and in return for her good work in the hospital expects the social recognition that women in nursing professions are still accorded in most cases even today. Ingrid follows the trends in her chosen field of paediatric nursing with great interest and wants to work according to the latest standards. She always aims for an almost ideal form of knowledge transfer, by training to learn from young trainee nurses what is new in training, and reciprocates by passing on her experiential knowledge to them. Someone who has become a paediatric nurse and who still likes working in that occupation after 30 years of shift work has a positive relationship to children and their parents. She herself says that she actually still likes working in her profession. However, the word "actually" expresses a certain amount of annoyance in her professional practice. This annoyance is primarily caused by rationalisation of hospital organisation, but also by a degree of flexibility that drives Ingrid to her limits. She describes her work on the ward for premature babies as working with "endless anxiety".

This could be interpreted as a deficiency in her professional attitude, but, on the contrary, is further evidence of her view of her profession as a vocation. She never trained for the difficult work she does on the ward for premature babies and is now worried that her lack of qualifications might result in her making mistakes that could endanger the lives of the premature babies. She almost envies the young paediatric nurses who receive such a broad training that they can also work on the ward for premature babies without any problems. Ingrid wants to practise her profession so well that this kind of work, too, is no problem for her. On the other hand, she is well aware of the qualities offered by her experiential knowledge. She has the "right sense" of when and how a paediatric nurse must take action and when to manage such action with the nursing objectives in mind. It is essential "to convey a sense of security and I think that is always the great advantage when you have been in your profession for a long time. You are simply better at that than a young nurse". The relationship to the anxious parents of sick children gains from Ingrid's mature personality.

The experiential knowledge of the older paediatric nurse is relied upon above all by the paediatricians and younger nurses. Ingrid has a basis that allows her to keep the crucial factors in mind even in critical situations. She is competent. Competence means being able to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant factors in complicated contexts and situations, also under pressure of time. Ingrid has acquired this professional capacity and is also aware of the fact. Despite the stressful working conditions, Ingrid's work in the children's hospital of a small town is still a great challenge for her, even after 30 years' in shift work. "Small hospital – big range of expectations. That's what I find totally interesting, because it's not just one medical discipline. Take surgery. There are so many things involved there as well, but we've got everything. That's why I enjoy it so much".

She finds personal affirmation in successfully managing varying contexts; she motivates herself by being open for new things, despite the increasing levels of stress. Ingrid is a communicative type of woman and her relationship to the doctors and young trainee nurses is described as collegial. It is a foregone conclusion for Ingrid that the future can only be mastered by young and old working together. She makes no mention of any generational conflicts. What does self-fulfilment in work have to do with practising a profession as a vocation? In a certain sense, it is an enhancement of the former work orientation. The expressive work orientation now governs one's whole life. The dubious aspects of this subjectivisation of work, with self-exploitation, over-exploitation and burnout being a few keywords in this context, cannot be discussed here. We refer instead to the relevant literature on the subject (cf. Moldaschl, Voss 2003, Voss, Pongratz 1998).

Like Ingrid, Paul is a prototypical example for this work orientation.

Paul, 39 years, IT specialist

Paul (39 years old) is an IT specialist. Although he continually emphasises that a university degree is not really essential to work in his profession, his professional attitude is based on the craft trades. This clearly stems from his father's trade and professional ethos. What is interesting about Paul's career is his employment history, i.e. the fact that every time he changed company, he tapped into new dimensions of his profession, in terms of the actual content of his work. He has worked in five different firms in the space of 15 years – a brewery, a consultancy, in the energy industry, in a transport company and now, indirectly, for a steel plant. Although he has “actually landed in something new each time”, he has always been involved with work processes that share a common metaphor of “flow”. What is new at each change is the content of the respective production process, but it remains a process, a “flow”. What he gains each time is knowledge of computerised process control. This process of gaining information and especially experiential knowledge and taking it with him began for him during his studies, but now continues through each new job he works in. In his relationship to work, one finds not only intrinsic motivation, but also an element of power over the production process. Only few people in the company collect as many data, as much knowledge and as much experience about the process as he does, so only few know as much about the company as he. However, he remains “inside” the process and does not stand over it.

Paul has his own style of work. He admits that he is sometimes in the firm for 14 to 16 hours. He attaches great value to his autonomy, however relative it may be. His autonomy is firstly an external one that is manifested in his freedoms regarding working hours, and secondly an inner autonomy that is expressed in his manner of working and especially in his interest in the actual content of work. Paul is a “self-legislator”, as he himself puts it. Paul hardly knows what real leisure time is, which he needs. He himself says that he nothing else to take his mind off work. For him, work is a challenge. He likes confronting and mastering this challenge and what is more, it is the content of his life and determines his relationship to work. He perceives the health risks as a risk, on the one hand, but on the other hand sees a perspective in acting on the basis of experience. This explains his undisguised admiration for older, experience colleagues: “It would be great if I could do what they can”. His hopes of his own experiential knowledge being duly appreciated masks the threat that working too much work poses. However, he does show a high degree of reflexivity with regard to experiential knowledge. For someone whose life is so strongly characterised by work, he thinks surprisingly intensely about communication within his family and in the other areas of life

outside the company as being constitutive for his experience. He sees his own personality, and personality in general, as being shaped by the experiences gained throughout one's life. "Everything plays a role". He also knows that he obtained his managerial position because "responsibility for the system" could be entrusted to him. "So my profession is characterised by learning". Continuing education and learning is an integral element of his work. Learning seems to be an objective necessity in IT professions. However, this necessity is fully accepted and subjectively realised by Paul. This also accords with his describing his profession as a "dream job". He reinforces what he considers positive in his choice of profession with the sentence "I've never regretted it".

When asked about his working day, Paul first mentions his family. He has to distinguish between the various working days according to whether or not they involve looking after the children. There is an obvious paradox here, because although he attaches great importance to the time he spends with his children, time that should actually be set apart, looking after the children is, for him, a part of his everyday working life. In other words, self-fulfilment in his professional work is so important to him that he subordinates everything to it, directly or indirectly.

For Paul, the determining factor is his central connection to work, his identification with the work he does. It also dominates his time orientation. This must lead to a conflict with his wife, of course, who has lived in separation from him for years. Only the problems that his children obviously suffer as a result of the situation lead to an invasion of his hermetic world. He loves his children, so he is also prepared to sacrifice some of his all-so-important working time for their benefit. Worries about their future are also causing him to think about the future of society. Despite his scepticism and disillusionment about political parties, he still votes at elections. He hopes that society in future will show more solidarity and starts with himself when it comes to behavioural change. These ideas are not a marginal aspect in his life, although they appear to be because of his entire interest, the overwhelming percentage of his time, is dedicated to work.

He is not a family man, therefore. The funny thing he sees in the fact that he is now spending more time caring for his children is not at all funny, of course, because it indicates there are many conflicts with his ex-wife, and that he was forced to take more care of his children. He readily admits that his attitude to life is that of a bachelor. Although he has fixed appointments to keep as a single person, he is free – free to exploit himself. Because he now plans them into his working life, he now has more time for his children. Now, having clearly decided in favour of his work, he feels free at the place where he locks himself in. The separation was the right step for him – now he feels free in his work, yet still accepts responsibility for his children. What got lost by taking a step into freedom is the relationship with his wife, with preference being given instead to his relationship to his work.

1.4.5 Work as social integration

The social patterns of interpretation of the relationship to work examined so far have focused on the individual's relationship to work, whereas the following patterns of interpretation are primarily concerned with dimensions of work that are always associated with work, but are now given a different, stronger weighting, or which even become the dominant feature. For the individual, work almost always means entering a social context that is valued by individuals in some form or other. Particularly when social bonds outside work are absent or

dissatisfying, perhaps even negative in nature, the importance of contacts gained through work becomes especially great. Work acquires paramount importance above all when the family proves inadequate as the primary location for social bonds.

This particularly applies in the case of Andrea.

Andrea, 31 years, Single, no children, precarious mini job

Andrea was born in 1976 and attended secondary school. After that she studied for two years in a commercial school. In 1994 she started three years of vocational training as an office clerk. After that she started work in an office. In 1999 she switched to be a call-centre agent. After a period of unemployment, Andrea started a one-year IT training course, which she finished in 2001. She gets a job right away in an Internet company, where she worked with enthusiasm for three years. After her dismissal she was unemployed and started to work in a “mini-job” as a barkeeper two years later.

During her three years of work in the Internet company, Andrea showed a keen interest in her work. In that type of work she certainly has an expressive reference towards her work. But now that she is unemployed and living on social welfare benefit, the instrumental orientation dominates. She seeks above all social integration through work. Work would also help her to structure her life, and even the mini-job provides her with a communicative link to society. Andrea is eager to learn and tries to obtain personal enrichment through training. Andrea has clear ideas about her vocational goals. She has a **clear job preference** and successfully completes her vocational training in that area. Andrea is willing to perform. She wants to get involved with many facets of her personality and wants to fulfil herself creatively. She accepts challenges and finds personal recognition in vocational success.

Andrea comes from a difficult family background. She grew up under dramatic circumstances. Her father was an alcoholic and her brother a drug addict. Her stepfather was aggressive to her and her mother was weak and did not protect her. The experience of unemployment worsened an already existing depression. Without the time structure and the social function she gained from working, Andrea was losing control of her everyday life. But with the assistance of a psychotherapist she was able to organise her everyday life during her unemployment. Socially she is isolated. Despite her difficult social background, she aspires to a structured life as in school or business processes.

Andrea is living at the lowest economic level, her financial reserves used up by unemployment. During her employment in the Internet company, she experienced an everyday life without financial worries. She aspires to economic independence. She wants to be able to earn her livelihood and not depend on the financial support she currently receives from the state. Andrea is only capable of mobilising limited economical, professional and family resources. She links her hopes for overcoming the resource-poor present to the acquisition of professional qualifications. Due to the lack of integration into networks of family and friends, she places increased importance on the professional opportunities provided by vocational training. With the support of her psychotherapist she retains her capacity to take action. She finds a “mini-job” in catering and escapes her isolation.

Andrea possesses a strong personal will. Born into a difficult family situation, she fights her way to enter vocational training for her dream job. She completes the training successfully. When she is made redundant later on she accepts the dual challenge of unemployment and mental illness and sets up a stabilising environment. Psychotherapy and mini-job are

instruments for her to regain responsibility and control over everyday life. Andrea's goal is to lead a "normal" life in financial and mental autonomy.

In the disintegration of her family and professional life she is not supported by personal or institutional access to life - or professionally experienced members of other generations. She shows no signs of a collective action orientation.

Tina, 44 years, temporary employment agency

Tina is 44 years old, lives alone and even in the past had no long-term relationships. She is currently working, for the third time already, for a temporary employment agency. "It's a bit monotonous. But those are the jobs that are done with temporary employees". Tina has a vocational school-leaving certificate and originally wanted to become a kindergarten teacher. However, she allowed herself to be dissuaded and has never really tried on account of the poor prospects of employment. She trained instead as a doctor's assistant in a paediatrician's surgery, even though she was never really interested in that profession. She does her traineeship because she naively believed that it had something to do with children. Her boss is a difficult person to deal with, and she will leave the profession as soon as she has finished her training. She does not have any real plan for her life and shows little will of her own. Instead, she lets herself drift and takes advantage of any opportunities that come her way. After one job in a private-sector food store, she starts working in the "P" store, where she stays for the next 17 years. The "P" store is one of a chain that sells electrical appliances in various German cities. She advances to a position as deputy chief cashier. The "P" store runs into financial difficulties, is sold and the workforce is reduced in size. The staff is given a "fantastic offer", which Tina comments on ironically as having to work more for less money. The senior managers were surprised and Tina was proud that she turned down the offer. She takes her case to the labour court after refusing to sign the new employment contract she was offered. Although she is awarded a small settlement and four and a half months suspension from work, she thinks her court action was a failure.

Tina receives unemployment benefit (ALG I) for almost the maximum possible period and then starts working for a temporary employment agency. Although she reflects on temporary work as modern slave labour, she also finds it positive that nobody forces one to do it. She is also aware, however, that she does not have the skills and qualifications needed for the employment market. But she does want to work. After temporary assignments of very different duration (from a few months to two years), Tina has been working as a production assistant for a last few weeks. She is now starting to realise that she was wrong in starting several different things but not pursuing them to the end. Tina belongs to a generation that sought niches as an alternative to a career. Tina found her niche in the "P" store and gained a certain amount of self-confidence there. This explains why being made redundant sparked resistance in her case. She now thinks critically about the employment market and the basic framework within which she has worked, but she also shows a tendency to be self-deprecating and to accept her fate. Tina's experience is that work can also lead into poverty and that there the state will not provide her with any support. This contrasts with positive experience of solidarity at family level.

Her fate shows that unemployment involves a certain degree of exclusion from public life, especially when one does not have a family of one's own. Tina finds that it is better to work and "to stay in the process". She hopes for a chance to get a proper job through temporary employment, but also feels powerless in a sense. Despite the bad conditions, she continues to

work in temporary employment. She has a very strong sense of duty and wants to do her work well, even on the last day. Tina reflects on her own lack of aims or ambition, but also allows her to be influenced very strongly by others all the time. Tina's life theme is the aimlessness of her life and the abandonment of responsibility for it. She has turned caution into an attitude to life. She is also very careful when looking for social contacts, although it is obvious that work has always provided her with social bonds that she values.

Whereas in Tina's case the social contacts she finds at work are threatened by economic ups and downs, in Julia's case the threat takes the form of a chronic illness.

Julia: Young woman, Social Security Clerk

Julia is 24 years old. After finishing her Baccalaureat, she completed vocational training as a social security clerk. This vocational training demands a lot from the trainees. By choosing this profession, she also chooses security and clear structures. Julia's vocational training became more difficult due to a long illness. Even though she missed more than three months, she passes her final exams. After recuperation she still remained chronically ill. At the end of her vocational training, three trainees were competing for a single vacancy. At first Julia loses, but due to the intervention of a superior she receives a temporary contract for six months. On the day of the interview, her contract is renewed for an additional month.

Julia has been an active member of a sports club for many years. At first she plays football for 13 years, then she and her father take over the training of a girls' team. At the time of the interview she has been preparing for her withdrawal from this position as coach. Julia will be doing her part for the club by taking care of administrative things. Julia is still living with her parents. However, she has signed a lease for her first very own apartment and is preparing her move.

Julia manages to compensate her 14 weeks of absence through hard work. She learns intensively and approaches her tasks actively. She acquires the support of experienced colleagues. Her ambition and drive for success give her the strength to complete the vocational training, despite her illness. She takes a high level of personal commitment for granted, and acts close to the limits of her own capacity. Julia is open and forward in the communication about her illness and expects to be judged on the merits of her performance. Julia deals rationally and in a pragmatic way with the fact that she is not employed directly after her vocational training and reflects on the reasons given, which do not convince her. Instead, she comes to the conclusion that her chronic illness must have been the real reason. This view lets her employer appear negatively, but she deals with this pragmatically – she generalises the actions of her employers and thus defuses her criticism. Julia has a positive impression of her employer. The company is organised efficiently and has some of the lowest costs in the business. Julia is proud of this and identifies with the company. She accepts the success-oriented management and performance-oriented culture – despite the personally experienced harshness after finishing the vocational training. Julia likes her job, she enjoys the assignment. The underlying conditions such as temporary employment and overtime spoil her fun, however. Both in employment and in sports, Julia demonstrates a strong awareness of performance and an action-based pragmatism. Julia shows an expressive work orientation. Apart from her professional competence, she also applies her communicative abilities. She sees her job and her position as a coach as a forum to experience her personality through communication and to experience herself as a strong and self-confident personality via relationships to customers, colleagues and team mates.

With determination and pragmatism she calculates risks and thus retains the ability to act. Julia modernises the if-then condition to a post-conditional pattern of reflexive individualisation in the risk society. In this way, she modernises the existing patterns of her lifestyle. She does not plan to have a family in the near future, as she only recently entered into a new relationship. Personal independence remains a criteria of her lifestyle.

Julia cannot banish the chronic illness from her life, but she refuses to let her life be ruled by it. She defends her independence. Julia will give up her position as a coach because it consumes a lot of time and forces her into a very narrow temporal corset. Another reason is the strong professional pressure she experiences. Overtime is common and her superiors expect Julia to remain longer. Under these circumstances Julia is not able to combine work and the position as coach.

1.4.6 Work as social convention

This social pattern has a relatively great range: Its main representatives are those who work because it is conventional to work. Work and life belong together and it is usual to work. Others come to this attitude because work that was once of vital interest for them has now become a habit, a convention; they have entered a process of resignation. Still others, who have felt originally work as a social constraint, got so accustomed to it that they do not any longer really feel the constraint.

We do not have examples for this latter case in the present research (but in other ones). The habit does not exclude that workers have an expressive work orientation; but this orientation does not have the enthusiasm and the dynamics as with an optimiser, or still less with one who seeks self-fulfilment in work. Frank is a typical example of the German working class in Baden–Württemberg: hard working, diligent, very efficient, successful, but everything without exaggeration. For example he would like to become director of a department but as there are no possibilities in the short range he does not consider to move to another firm, he is not bitter with his destiny. On the contrary he is happy and content to work for a firm with international reputation.

Frank, 37 years, married, two children, engineer

Frank works as an engineer in one of Germany's most important gear producing enterprises. He adapts automatic gearboxes, which are constructed for trucks to the needs of busses. After secondary school he does his military service and then takes a vocational training in the IT-sector. He studies electrical engineering and a stage leads him to the Zahnradfabrik. First he has difficulties to hear what his predecessor tries to teach him to hear but after one year and a half he is able to do his job; to adapt automatic truck gearboxes to the needs of touring busses. His wife is caring for the two children, but they are planning one or two children more- a conventional family structure- still widespread in South German countryside. Frank is content with his job even if the wishes of the clients, of the owners of the touring busses sometimes create difficulties. He would like to become the head of a department, but he knows that in his firm these jobs are occupied right now. He would have to change his employer to get one, but he prefers to stay with his actual employer. Tradition plays an important role in his life; he wants to stay with his employer. He sticks to a traditional family model. Work is for him a social convention, but he wants to limit working time in order to have enough time for his family. In the region where he lives the traditional social conventions are still very wide spread. Frank must familiarise again and again with the subject of his work and look for the

parameters he can change. So he can for example change the technique of closing the coupling in the bus.

He needed one and a half year to get familiarised with the coupling system and its noises. He thinks it was “a long haul that had to be endured”. His first year, he lived it as depressing because he could not understand what his colleague and predecessor did hear when they were on common testing tours with the busses. Today Frank is specialised and reacts in a sensitive way to the noises of the automatic gear in a bus. Now he is content with his job, with his work that gives him some pride and work satisfaction. On the first glance the case of Volker does not seem to belong here. The beginning of his working looks typical for a committed IT-specialist.

Volker, 50 years, three children, IT-technician, clerk in a bank

Volker studied informatics at a university. Then he worked in several software-houses. He worked with enthusiasm and started a family, he became a father. Despite working time reduction Volker worked too much and had a breakdown. In order to recuperate Volker ceased to do professional work for three quarters of a year and became a houseman for this time. Volker has been married for 18 years; he has a daughter and two sons.

Volker has been working as an IT-technician in a bank in a town of northern Germany for 15 years. He has become a specialist for a big computer and has to deal with structural problems of the bank as well as well as with clients of the bank. His direct colleagues and his superiors are of the same age. Women work in the bank above all as assistants.

A rupture in his private life changes everything. His modernised family model has failed; he has lived the traditional family model until his wife left him. Volker has a new partner now who works in the same bank. She brought two children, her two daughters, into the new partnership. The rupture in his private life has a parallel in his work life, less abrupt but that has repercussions on his private life – not on his new partnership but on his leisure activities.

Volker had begun his professional life with an expressive work orientation, but now things have changed. He would like to reduce his working time, but that is not possible at the bank. He prefers to keep his secure job at the bank. Volker adapts to the situation, he does not look for new challenges neither in his professional life nor in his private life. He even reduces the time dedicated to his hobbies, like his motorbike, cycling or garden work. “Banks have become very cost oriented” tells us Volker. Working in the bank is no longer fun for him “because everything has become tremendously regularised”. Volker more and more does his work because it has to be done. Working in a bank always is partly documentation of the work- and that part of his work has grown more and more important. Nevertheless, Volker is experienced, has routine and deals successfully with difficult tasks. But he does it without enthusiasm now. Volker also tells us of a growing distance not only to work but also to his colleagues. Volker lives his work as a process of resignation.

Volker’s attitude to work has become very conventional, a habit; he does his work because it has to be done.

1.4.7 Work as an equi-poised part in a balance of work and life

In this pattern of relationship to work the centre of life is not so absolutely work, as it is often the case. Work is not neglected, it is even in the middle of an expressive work orientation but these workers care with scrupulousness that work does not impair their leisure. These workers want to realise an equi-poised balance of work and leisure, of work and life.

Claudia, 60 years, divorced, a son, accountant

Claudia works as an accountant in the staff department of a regional branch of the employers' association for the construction industry. She is responsible for everything that has to do with money: paying the salaries of 13 employees, paying the bills for repairs and so on. Furthermore she is practically the maid-of-all-work, she buys the flowers when there is an anniversary, calls the artisan when there is something rotten and so on. She is very interested in having the utmost of leisure time, so she rationalised the office work and then negotiated her working time: Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. She has a lot of liberties because she is very efficient and reliable. Her boss is very content with her so she can make private calls in the working time without problems. It is only important that her work is done efficiently and in time. Claudia finished secondary school (Realschule) and then completed a vocational training as a commercial clerk for wholesale trade and for export and import and also as an accountant.

Then she left northern Germany and worked in Frankfurt for three years. She got a son and then moved with the son's father and her son to Freiburg. She stopped working for a year and was busy caring for her son. Her partnership failed, she moved back to her home town where her mother helped her raise the son. Now she is divorced, her son is adult and lives his own life, and she has been working for thirty years for the small employers' association. She has a good relationship to her son even though their interests are very different. In general her relation to other generations is good. Claudia likes her work but she also wants as much leisure time as possible. She has an expressive work orientation, but she also has a very expressive leisure orientation. She sees work as a necessary part in the balance of work and life.

Anette's case is different because the work-life balance is planned but not realised. We don't know and we cannot anticipate what she will realise of her plans and how. But it could end in a similar bipartition of life as with Claudia; Annette could also abandon totally working if her partner will earn enough money to support the livelihood of both. Nowadays that is not probable but nevertheless possible.

Annette, 29 years, nurse, partnership

Annette has been working for 5 years in a hospital with religious background in a small town in northern Germany. She has finished secondary school and then made a vocational training as a nurse in the same hospital she is working now. Initially she had no fixed ideas about her future job, but in a process of exclusion of other possibilities she chose the vocation of a nurse and after some experience she is content with her choice. Furthermore she even made some additional vocational training and is now dealing with the apprentices in their practical stage in the hospital.

The cooperation in her team functions without problems. The hospital has enough work and retains high social standards. But they have no reserve manpower and a high workload causes stress for the nurses, especially for elder colleagues. Problems also exist because of the

different work cultures of elder and younger employees. The elder ones follow a fixed work scheme, but the younger ones adapt in a flexible way to the ups and downs of the work process. But it is not an open conflict; despite many discussions the colleagues do not involve hierarchy or workers' representation.

Annette uses the possibilities of further training, because she wants to actualise her knowledge and she understands it as an empowerment of her personality. But she does the training for herself since there are no real career possibilities for nurses and the job of a chief of a ward is no attraction, because it offers no important financial advancement and represents a loss of professional practice.

In the long term Annette even foresees the possibility that she will - at the age of 50 for instance – quit the hospital. She fears the too important routine of the work, the state of being used; but she does not know where to go.

Annette's life has two different parts, one part is her work which she likes and where she has an expressive work orientation; the other part is her free time where she dreams with her partner of living in a farm house and having children. She already has lots of animals, like a horse, a dog, guinea pigs and ducks. This part of her life is a counterpart and she understands it as a counter project to her work in the hospital. She sees her work as an important part of the balance between work and life.

2. A generational perspective: profiles of work and life situations

2.1 Methodical Considerations

The following analysis describes work orientations and professional strategies on the basis of the case studies of the first chapter. For achieving a generational perspective typical work and life situations are condensed in profiles. On the basis of these profiles the analysis comes to a discussion about the capability for solidarity or tensions between generations.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

In the next step of examination we will view work orientations in the generational perspective. This perspective results from the concept of life situations. "Viewing the life situations of an actor, sociological sciences are examining criteria, which determine a person's situation, for instance gender, age, region, nationality and period of birth." (Berger/Hradil 1990, p. 10) Life situations are expanding the research with important dimensions; just like the term social integration in the field of work orientations does not only refer to the work place or the occupation. "In the concept of life situations we take a look beyond the fixation at the earnings; the multi dimensionality of circumstances, their creation not only by the market, but also by the beneficial state and informal sources are being acquired." (Berger/Hradil 1990, p. 19) The importance of family for the daily life differs immensely depending on for instance, weather there are children in the household and how old they are, weather there are additionally supporting family resources or senior citizens who have to be looked after. Furthermore, the concept of life situations is open for dynamic changes in the social life. Life situations constitute a timely cross-reference. "For instance, there is a big difference, if something still lies ahead of you, or if you already put it behind

yourself” (Kohli 1990, p. 400) The same incident, for instance, the loss of occupation or a divorce, represents another time horizon for a 25 year old, than it would for a 55 year old. So circumstances differ immensely, depending on age or phase of life.

This analysis, orientated at the situations and phases of life, acquires the generational term from Mannheim. Big social incidents, like wars, possess the power to provide a basis for the own bracing in history. “This, by the way, cannot be accomplished by the individuals themselves; it is only possible to refer to such an event as an identity anchor, if it is collectively regarded to as an event.” (Kohli 2003, p.6) Those important social incidents, with a formative power and coverage, containing big parts of the population, are not subject in the present examination. Besides the function as a mechanism for imputation, generation can be understood as a mechanism for mobilisation, the pursuit of political or material interests. “A generation can become the focus of common interests and therefore the basis of collective mobilisation.” (Kohli 2003, p. 6). Generation is viewed as a social formation with potentially same interests and as a potential collective actor.

The welfare state has formed a system of rights and duties, which, in many questions, is based on the age of citizens. “Such a age-based system of granting and denying the access to resources is irrelevant for the generational question, as long as it remains stable, which means that every specific age group is being treated just the way the according age group has been treated in the past or will be treated in the future.” (Kohli 2003, p. 8) In the course of the removal of welfare benefits, the risk of generational disparities increases. But from the increasing disparities between the generations may not be concluded, that an age of specific generational lobby groups is imminent. “Generation as a basis of mobilisation of big social groups can only be expected in exceptional cases. ... Unlike to Mannheim’s expectation, a social situation does not necessarily lead to a generational correlation. Mobilisation is a process that requires a lot of preconditions; it especially depends on the institutional bonds, which exist in a society for those potential generations and the competition between them.” (Kohli 2003, p. 16) The question of mobilisation of the specific generational interests and their preconditions narrows the perspective of generational correlations down to the relation model competition. In the following chapter four kinds of generational correlations are being differentiated.

In the continuing analysis a generational term comes in effect, that assumes divergent chances and risks of the different age groups on the labour market and concentrates those with different political and cultural experiences. Therefore we suggest distinguishing three generations.

- The younger generation today is between 15 and 29 years old, which means that they were born between 1977 and 1991. Members of this age group are living consciously in the nineties and the new century. This generation has experienced the brake down of the eastern block and the expansion of the EU with the middle European states. The preparation and realisation of the European economy and currency union are self-evident for this generation; they have known the liberalisation of the market for goods and labour since their childhood.
- The middle-aged generation today is between 30 and 49 years old, which means that they were born between 1957 and 1976. This generation has spent their youth actively in the seventies and eighties and thereby experienced the institutions and the politics of the

EWG and the COMECON. The division of Europe into two blocks was naturally for them.

- The older generation today is between 50 and 65 years old. This generation contains the age groups born between 1941 and 1956. This generation has spent their youth actively in the fifties and sixties. She knows the “cold war”, has experienced the founding of the EWG, EFTA and COMECON consciously.

The representatives of those three generations are living in different phases of their lives and occupational careers, they are determined in, before or after specific generational passages of status and life situations. Those have to be further differentiated by gender and social and ethnic origins.

2.2.3 Forms of generational correlations

With Höpflinger (1999, p.20 ff) four forms of generational correlations can be distinguished.

a) Generational segregation

The social and cultural division of the generations is called segregation. Every generation lives its own life, pursues its own interests and develops its own culture, without resulting in mutual correlations. Höpflinger especially spectated segregation tendencies of the generations in their spare-time activities. Seitz (2004) describes segregation tendencies in the work environment, “where potentials on the operational level, which lie in a constructive exchange between young and old employees, are hardly appreciated and never used by human resource managers” (176). The personnel policy of the nineties is in many fields marked by not overtaking trained employees and the early separation from older employees. “The reduction of personnel leads to a homogenisation of the structure of personnel in the middle-aged generation, since younger and older employees are hardly occupied anymore.” (176). On the individual level Seitz describes an interaction paradox: Strategies like withdrawal and avoiding are being preferred and lead to a separation of generations in the company. In contradiction to this practice and the associated references to the other generations as a preventing power or simply as competition, the majority of the respondents see potential in an intergenerational collaboration. “Especially the young ones would appreciate a generational collaboration and they hope, due to the experience of the elderly, to receive support and assistance in their functions.” (177) This hope is a contrast to the reality of many companies, which is characterised by “the disappearing of generational cooperation”, a “tendency for speechlessness between the generations” as well as “few exchanging relations between the generations” (178).

b) Generational conflict

The conception of disputes between the generations comes down to two basic models: generational conflicts as modernisation and as lobby groups.

- Based on a father-son conflict a cutthroat competition states between the established generation and the replacing generation. This competition leads to disputes about the hegemony in questions of culture; fashion and conflicts between lobby groups are ascribed to the competition for scarce resources.
- Different interests between the generations originate, for instance, from the inequity in the distribution of beneficial welfare, caused by the demographical change.

“Critically we can summarise, that the thesis of the generational conflict on the one hand is/are based on comparatively simple assumptions about the processes of social alteration (generational conflict as modernisation). In many cases they are based on a cyclical conception of a continuous exchange of old and new. They associate with ideas of processes of consistent approach and alienation between the generations. On the other hand opposite interests are picked as a central theme, which are explained partly by socio-biological assumptions and partly by demographical changes in the context of systems of social security.” (Lüscher/Liegle 2003, p. 262) The perspective of the dynamic and the coherence between the generations is not covered in the conception of generational conflict.

c) *Generational solidarity*

Generational solidarity is usually mentioned in context to the familial ways of life (e.g. BMFSFJ 2005 a. 2006).

- On the one hand solidarity is seen as a value, which is passed on from one generation to another. “The Family stands – rhetorically speaking – as a preferred place where solidarity is being learned (instead of: can be learned)” (Lüscher/Liegle 2003, p. 264)
- On the other hand solidarity is seen as a mechanism of social regulation aside from market and hierarchy. Here, solidarity is mostly limited to small, manageable social groups. (Lüscher/Liegle 2003, p. 268).

Against the use of the term generational solidarity, for describing correlations between the generations, one can argue, that only the proportions between the generations, but not the correlations themselves, are being analysed. The analysis of generational correlations based on comparing generational conflicts and generational solidarity obscures the question after basic logics in the correlations between the generations. So the logic of generational correlations is expected to describe the specific manner, in which members of the different generations interact.

Viewing generational correlations the authors confront two logics.

- In the kinship binding responsibilities control the exchange of benefits. Responsibilities are bedded in judicial and moral regulations or regulations, which underlie negotiation (e.g. in between siblings). Benefits are inner familial often defined as *supports*. Parent-child relations are in many cases described as the principle of reciprocity. This principle does not only stand for reciprocity itself, but also the implicit mutual responsibilities that evolve from a continuous “give and get”. Reciprocity forms acting (more or less) into a stable social context. This capability is often normatively interpreted as a value itself.
- However, when relations are orientated at the basic pattern rationality, complementarities become an antonym for reciprocity (Lüscher/Liegle 2003 p. 275). Complementarities in the relations between the generations are achieved, when the actions are orientated at cost-benefit-principles.

d) *Generational ambivalence*

In the specific character of generational correlations “two principles come in effect, which we indicated with the terms reciprocity and rationality. One can meet them when analysing singular actions or action patterns, as well as long contexts of actions and the related

languages and abstract concepts.” (Lüscher/Liegle 2003, p. 285). The authors generate from the coexistence of the logic of reciprocity and rationality in generational correlations the term of generational ambivalence. Characteristic for ambivalence is, that

- The ambivalence generating opposites are part of the same category (e.g. love and hate, but not love and respect). Ambivalence cannot be dissolved, by just placing one factor above the other.
- The opposites possess a timely relation of simultaneity, which, depending on the topic, can be characterised by different time horizons.
- Ambivalences are the result of an interpretation, a reflected attribution by the involved subjects or third parties.
- Ambivalences mark the identity as abeyance.

Ambivalences basically form in social situations, which are comparably characterised by continuity and change. (Höpflinger 1999) This especially applies for intergenerational relations in the working environment. Every company, every branch and basically every organisation are located in the area of conflict between business-survival and the adapting to a changing environment. So the relations between the generations in the company are framed multiple in continuity and alteration.

Generational ambivalence as a model for analysis can be connected to other sections. The basic idea, to overcome the restriction, which inheres bipolar models of examination, with an open term, allows the analysis of a versatile range of topics.

e) Summary

The examination of work orientations and their relevance for relations between the generations in the company is based on the following concepts:

- The perspective of life situations directs the view on specific age-group phases in the occupational and familial career
- The generational perspective centres attention on specific age-group experiences and expectations and the resulting interests.
- The relational perspective allows the description of forms of interactions and logics of actions.
- The following questions are of interest: Are there specific generational work orientations and what do they look like? Which experiences and expectations are made regarding the collaboration of generations in the company?

2.3 Profiles of the young generation

The quest for the highest possibly achievable degree of social security is a recurring motive that occurs within almost every interview with members of the young generation. It seems to be, at least in the background, the action-guiding principle. Primarily this implies the security of employment. The work orientations of the young generation are characterised on the one

hand by a status of passage from the system of occupational training into the employment system. On the other hand the increase and collection of practical experience in the job and the application of up-to-date knowledge in the working process plays an important role. Besides young people are concerned with the formation of an own household as well as with the search for a partner and the preparations for starting a family.

2.3.1 *Quest for safety*

In the light of this work orientation, the quest for social security, particularly the minimisation of the risk of unemployment, gains an outstanding importance. The principle of risk minimisation becomes an action-guiding motive concerning the choice of the future occupation and other situations requesting decisions. *Than I could get a vocational training as a mechanic, industrial mechanic or in the electronic sector. So I only heard good things and so on, secure position, so I thought, why not try it there, and I got the job.* (Markus, 21 years) To obtain the affiliation to the alleged secure company the security searcher shows willingness to compromise. They even accept working conditions and work assignments, which are clearly under their technical and formal qualification and personal expertise. *Well my position is not very challenging. They try to find some additional work for me. So I do not have to do the same stuff over and over.* (Markus, 21 years) The career entry is disappointing.

They demonstrate high motivation and willingness to perform, and they push themselves to their limits of accomplishment in order to protect their position in the company. In doing so the search for safety by all means associates with ambition and enthusiasm for the specialist dimensions of the profession. Thus the process of learning may turn into a doubly connoted strategy of pursuing goals of security and the building up of competence. *It's hard to find a good position there without any good connections. But there are hardly any open positions that are challenging. The job I have now is not challenging at all, that's why I try to educate myself.* Indeed safety searchers expect acceptance and appropriate work and employment conditions of the company. But the fear of unemployment and social anticlimax is the crucial factor that affects their decisions. Because young employees take pride in a reliable and safe job they avoid criticising the companies. With every intrinsic motivation the work orientation therefore stays at least instrumental. The time orientation of the security searcher is preferentially related to the present. Search for job security is a pragmatic strategy to get the anxiety under control. The collaboration with the older generations is marked by ambivalences. *So in my company I am the assistant jumper. I got the job after one year already, while there are people, who did not get the position after 25 years on the job.* (Markus, 21 years). Long professional and familial planning horizons are impossible. The family focus depends on the professional success and therefore remains noncommittal. There are no references to commitment in society and politics.

The cooperation with the elder generations is characterised by ambivalences. On the one hand side the security searchers seek for the support of the older jobholders through a high degree loyalty, on the other hand side they are jealous of the advanced experience and the social vested rights of the older generation.

2.3.2 *The planned advancement*

Differently from the “security searcher” the “advancement searcher” allows the fears of dismissal and unemployment only a subordinate relevance. He regards technically demanding tasks as a personal challenge. *Since everyday is different, there are always new duties, always challenges.* (Ernst, 27 years) He wants to master these challenges on his own account, and by

performing this task he seeks to grow personally as well as technically. Doing this he is reaching the technical limits of his vocational expertise and his responsibility.

He is ambitious and tries to displace those limits by learning. Thus he settles for a further qualification in order to be promoted. *I don't know if I want to grow old doing this. I love the job itself, but one wants to progress occupationally and financially. Because I pretty much reached a limit there as an usual electrician. Now you can only advance as a technician. So I am probably going to use the next months to go to school.* (Christian, 28 years) This step is planned, already discussed with supervisors and to a certain extent attaches smoothly to the current professional tasks. The „advancement searcher” shows an expressive orientation towards work. His intentions to qualify himself give him the opportunity for further technical specialisation.

“Advancement searcher” from the younger generation primarily pursues their professional careers and plan on starting a family after having reached their career goals. *Right now I just feel too young. When I start school now and than when I finish school I might actually think about becoming a father.* (Christian, 28 years) Their time orientation is concentrated on the future. They invest time and money into the build-up of competence and the acquisition of qualification degrees. The younger years are dedicated to the professional advancement; the middle age is regarded to as the period of family foundation.

Co-operation with the older generations in the company is affected by an expressive work orientation, ambition and the striving for more expertise and responsibility. *When we have a problem with the IT he usually shows up. He doesn't mind to learn new things. As a supervisor he has to stay up-to-date somehow. Due to the staffing there is not enough time anymore to learn theses things yourself. So we have to show him.* (Christian, 28 years) The leadership positions in the enterprise are taken by elderly persons, the young „advancement searcher” want to gain the knowledge and encouragement of the older colleagues and organise their relations with the older generation according to a complementary pattern.

2.3.3 The planned dropout

The “dropouts” are proud of their occupation, their competence and their responsibility. After few years of work the “dropouts” already recognise the advancement limits in terms of professional career and managerial responsibility, which they can reach with their vocational education. They consider their professional career regarding these limits. That is why the actual professional situation is valued quite positively. Identification with profession, job and also often enough with the employer raises awareness of the limits. *Unfortunately, you do not have big chances of advancement as a nurse in a hospital.* (Annette, 29 years) In spite of an expressive job orientation and professional success the “dropouts” do not recognise any attractive prospects either in financial or professional regard or in terms of their position in the operational hierarchy. On basis of this lack of prospects the daily engagement loses its sense. The attention focuses on the strain and the physical and mental erosion of the manpower by its daily use. *You cannot stand 40 or 50 years of this kind of pressure. At least not under these circumstances, I realised watching the elderly. I don't know what I am going to do when I reach that age.* (Annette, 29 years)

The “dropouts” are future-orientated; they create a functional alternative in form of advancement for themselves. Besides building a family a professional re-orientation is considered. Whereas the start of a family is definitely planned for the middle age, the

professional re-orientation projects a rather strong intentional character. *I would really enjoy working in the medical department of some big insurance agency, where I could concentrate on things like the outpatient care. This is really where I want to go, but I know I cannot realise that in my current position.* (Annette, 29 years)

The planned dropout releases the young employees from the strategic consideration to the elderly colleagues and to the general loyalty. The “dropouts” can handle conflicts and do not avoid them. *There are different kinds of old people. There are the ones doing everything carefully and controlling themselves so much, that they don't even progress. And there are the ones that take a long time, due to their insecurity and ignorance. There are always some elderly who do not educate themselves any further and it becomes obvious after a while.* (Annette, 29 years) Diverging expectations are brought up for discussion; also the conflicts in the company are carried out. Nevertheless, differences in capacity and motivation to perform can turn to tensions between the generations.

2.3.4 Struggling through life

Young Generation members, who are employed for a short-term or work as interim employees for temporary employment agencies often show indication for a struggle through life. *There is always hope, but the first year we did not have any job security. After that we used it right away.* (Peter, 22 years) As with those seeking a secure or more permanent career, the start of their professional career is a disappointment. In many cases they are not placed in a position appropriate to their professional capabilities and are threatened with the loss of skills recently acquired in their educational training. In addition, they live in constant fear of being laid-off or becoming unemployed. *I am not so uneducated, I have some skills too.* (Peter, 22 years) This is augmented by the fact that the occupation provides only a small material income. Their work orientation is instrumental; they work in order to secure their livelihood.

Struggling through life means concentrating on the presence. They show no systematic search strategy for employment at an attractive company. Rather, their occupational engagement is spontaneous and contingent. They allow themselves to be governed by prejudices and the advice of alleged experts, and they keep distance from job-market experts and institutions. *I am somewhere in between. Now they take the elderly, than probably me-than I grow old and they take the younger ones.* (Peter, 22 years) In many cases they think in terms of black and white. They have adjusted their goals to fit the current state of affairs and have put their wish for a secure job before any personal employment interests. They invest neither time nor money in their professional perspectives.

Attitudes towards familial concerns are also characterised by a short-term approach. *They were all older than me. I remember it coincidentally. I really think they all had more experience than me.* (Peter, 22 years) Family planning remains without commitment and is dependent upon job-market success. Personal desires and plans are left unexpressed or unmade. The relation to older generations is contingent and dependent upon the situation. Concentration is rather directed to their own generation: in the struggle to obtain the few secure jobs that exist, the actors see themselves in competition with other young and potential jobholders.

2.3.5 Young generation: work orientations and life situations

The work orientations of the younger generation are marked by specific life situations and levels of status, especially by the choice of occupation and the transfer from the vocational to the occupational system. In the family life the focus is on moving out the parents' house, the search for the right partner and the start of an own family.

On the professional level, the gainful occupation obtains in circumstances, marked by social mobility, at least for the occupationally stable and integrated youth, the function of an anchor. An expressive organisation, characterised by the identification with the occupation and its professional requirements, builds the basis for a positive relation to the work. Complementary we witness an unquestioned and positive performance on the personal level. Occupational requirements are seen as challenges and are associated with high standards for the quality of one's own work. The occupational self-confidence, proudness of one's work, results from the secure handling of modern technologies and functional tools. In short: the occupationally integrated youth is aware of the quality and high productivity of their work.

As employers however they show less self-confidence. Only when, similar to the dropout, there is a clear goal, they settle on a path. The time perspective is directed toward the future. Still, strategies of compromising the own goals and adapting to "the situation" are at least implicitly considered. Security searcher and actors eking out a living on the other side try to explicitly reduce risks of the labour market. Their time perspective is present orientated; fear of unemployment lead to strategies of risk minimisation. This time perspective, focusing on the moment, prevents young generations from investing in their occupational and personal development.

The private level is marked by strong, but confronting, familial orientations. The integration of the family of origin in the daily life plays a major role, but the generational conflict is not of big importance. Moving out the parents' house is naturally, but it is usually not urged by the parents. In times of strong competition on the labour market, the family of origin rather represents a place of tranquillity. The heavy generational confrontations in familial relations, which were significant in the seventies and eighties, can hardly be found anymore. The young participants do not show any generational consciousness. The own starting of a family is planned for the adult years. Usually, plans for own families are vague and are subordinated to the occupational progress or the attaining of a stable occupational position.

Social and explicitly political orientations are not show in our small sample. The institution of democracy and market are not questioned. Political or social orientations are not important; competition and meritocracy find acceptance as a basis of daily life.

Contact to other generations in a company usually comes down to relations with the middle-aged generation. The uncritical term stands as a basis for generational correlations and for tensions between the generations. It stands as a basis, because it allows a complementary exchange of professional and expert knowledge. In the cooperation with the elderly, the term can regard to tensions, when they pursue a more distant commitment. Parallel the potential for competition and conflicts in the young generation is higher than for conflicts between the generations themselves.

2.4 Profiles of the middle-aged generation

The middle-aged generation of the 30 to 49 year olds has accomplished the entrance into the working live; university graduates generally have some years of work experience by now. Thus generation possesses not only work experience, but also usual expert knowledge and routine. At the same time the middle age years are together with the late years of the youth the phase of family foundation, the time of steady partnerships with a common apartment and children. The middle generation thus has to take more responsibilities for others than the younger and the older generation: for the partner and children. For that reason the middle generation has to develop arrangements to fulfil those demands and at the same time to fulfil their career goals and their material needs. Women have to take the decision whether or not they want children. During this time there are very often changes between the single status, partnerships, the foundation of families, separation and break-up of partnerships and the start of new partnerships and families.

Traditionally, stable labour market integration is the symbolic base for the takeover of responsibilities in the private and professional life. On the background of mass unemployment and fierce competition for jobs this symbolic base is not secure any more for the middle generation. The stabilisation of the private life is also questioned because of the erosion of traditional forms of families. The question is which work orientations and professional strategies the men and women of the middle generation face this challenge.

2.4.1 Established

The work orientations and professional strategies of the establisher are centred on consolidation and defence of the professional position. After the completion of their qualification they have managed their entrance into the labour market successfully. *And that is my function, to take care of that. When there are inconsistencies, since we are working together with outside firms.* (Fritz, 43 years) The establishers have accumulated professional expert knowledge and connected it with company- or branch-specific knowledge elements. Within in the company hierarchy they are on the lower management level. Their tasks are mainly technical. They also have personnel responsibility, but only for small teams. Their focus is less on the management of processes but on the application of their technical expertise in the work process. Establishers do their work with an intrinsic motivation. They connect their personal forthcoming in the job with the accumulation of technical competence, enriched with know how. Continuous further qualification is for the establishers part of their professional lives. Concerning professional changes they follow the pattern of “enrichment”. They take over tasks that add on to the position already achieved. Their work orientation is expressive, work means fun and is considered a personal challenge. *I get a really good feeling from solving something really tricky.* (Frank, 37 years) The concept of performance of the establishers is directed towards the accomplishment of demanding tasks.

Parallel to their professional establishment the establishers also engage themselves in the family life. The men claim the participation in the care and education of small children. The professional and private claims lead to a conflict of objectives that often stays latent. Paid work and career are considered as the base for the family and thus stays priority. The latent conflict on claims not fulfilled prey on the establishers identification with their professional positions. The women are often involved to a much higher degree in the conflict of professional establishment and the responsibility for the children. While the career of the establisher can be described very often by stagnation, the foundation of a family promises diversion. The image of the family is characterised by a traditional division of labour between

men and women. As long as the children live with the family, the modernised “provision marriage”, with the men earning the main part of the income and the women contributing with small jobs, is considered as the aspired live model. But the man has lost his traditional role as the head of the family.

The Establishers watch the cooperation with other generations with attention. The young generation is awarded with an intuitive relationships towards IT, but a deficit in life experience, technical know how and often a missing sense for the economical and technological adequacy of solutions. Establishers strive for a complementary relationship with the younger generation in the work process. They open scope for development where the younger ones can bring in their IT competence and in return they provide their technical and professional competence. With this strategy the establishers of the middle generation also aim to defend their position in the companies’ hierarchy. The cooperation with the older generation is only of little significance, because in many departments there work almost no older people above 50. The superiors of the establishers belong normally also to the middle generation, often they are only a few years older. The establishers of the middle generation consider their chances for professional advancement critical. The awareness, that they will stay in their actual position for the next fifteen to twenty years is a shadow on their pride of the acquired technical competence and the reached position.

Family and work determine the every day life of the establishers. The time orientation is directed towards the presence, family and professional establishment absorb the attention. Cultural and political engagements do not play a role. The labour unions are considered as positive because their function in the enforcement of social standards.

2.4.2 Socially and professionally demoted

After their vocational training and/or their occupational start, which is marked by professional, hierarchic or financially attractive work conditions, the socially and professionally demoted of the middle-aged generation lose their affiliation for their company. *After 17 years I really wasn’t aware of the situation on the labour market.* (Tina, 44 years) Oftentimes they have started their working life in branches, which reduced personnel during the structural economic changes of the nineties. Their professional career is often characterised by working long years in branches, very different to their vocational training and therefore losing their professional competence or suffering losses of occupational qualifications due to long family phases. The group of socially demoted also includes employees of the former GDR, which lost their professional competence at the exchange of the system in 1989, as well as people, which personal crises like illnesses or accidents have set them back. It is very decisive, that in the middle age years an awareness of professional and material demotion develops, *Coming from the top to the bottom... that is really an experience.* (Tina, 44 years)

Facing unemployment, oftentimes repeated and long lasting is also typical for socially demoting. In many cases, despite having had a vocational training, they are pushed to sectors of the labour market, which look for unskilled workers. Occupational decisions are orientated at short-term profits. Socially demoting is planning for short-terms, their time orientation is directed toward the present. They often face complex decisions, but can hardly evaluate the consequences. Their employment relationships are usually instable. The companies do not invest in qualifying employees of this category and the professionally demoting does not have any interest in further training anyway.

The work orientation is instrumental; the own occupational goals are not pursued (anymore). In many cases they rely on getting lucky and obtaining a secure position. The pursuit of financial security plays an important role, but the socially and professionally demoting of the middle-aged generation already experienced being poor and they learned, that life keeps going even with a low financial budget. *But knowing you hit rock-bottom, it certainly gives you some kind of freedom.* (Tina, 44 years) This experience creates a pragmatism, which eases the adaptation to bad work conditions, critical material living conditions and oftentimes difficult familial arrangements.

With the increasing age fears of not being able to handle the high requirements of flexibility in the sector of marginal qualifications grow. Socially demoting of the middle-aged generation address the critical occupational career at least implicitly. The attention is hereby focused on avoided catastrophes or on an even worse career. The familial situation is in many cases characterised by a brake up with the own parents.

2.4.3 Bearer

Bearer identify with their position. *I enjoy the work itself actually.* (Sebastian, 30 years) The identification is associated with the professional aspects of the work. After ten years and more on the job they have reached a high professional level as well as occupational routine. In technical occupations they are proud to perform precision work, in office jobs they are proud of knowing all the details and having an overview. Performance on the job is self-evident for them. Continuous skill work leads to an expert status in the branch or the company. The job is used for expressively living out the professional competences. Executive functions and the distancing from the immediate position as a result, do not seem attractive or even realisable. *One goal would be the position of my current superior. But there is a colleague, who is only two years older than me, which means, chances are not good right now.* (Daniel, 42 years)

While the professional dimension of the gainful occupation is marked by identification, the relation to the job, concerning labour aspects, is very distant. *I am very dissatisfied I have to say. Well, I know how it can be otherwise.* (Daniel, 30 years) There are objections against the organisation and against important representatives, in many cases based on the own, very high rated, professional competence. They criticise dysfunctional procedures, incompetent superiors or inequitable material or symbolic structures: *We used to have a wage of 130%. And now ...from 106% to 121 %, of course, many are not motivated.* (Sebastian, 30 years)

So the relation to work is marked by identification and distance. Significant for the Aushalter is that this antagonism is not dissolved. *Jesus, I have got a wife, kids and a house, what am I supposed to do?* (Sebastian, 30 years) He sees himself in a situation of powerlessness. As the provider of a family, on the one hand he has to secure the well being of his family, on the other hand he does not see a sense in engaging in the position in his company. *Right now, due to having a family, I am not very willing to move, I am not very mobile.* (Daniel, 42 years) Voice and exit, the two classical options for actions in conflict situations, are no options for Aushalter, because on the one hand they do not believe there are chances for internal advancements for them and on the other hand they see themselves chained to the company, due to the financial responsibility for the family.

In the cooperation with the other generations, bearers are part of the representatives of expertise in the company. The exchange with the younger ones is seen positively. *You have to build up young people during these times, even if there is little work.* (Sebastian, 30 years)

2.4.4 Middle-aged generation: work orientations and life situations

The middle-aged group shows no generational consciousness, as it can be found under the term “Baby Boomer” in the USA (Myers 2007). Unlike younger generations they have lived actively during the aggregation of work requirements, the shortening of personnel and the loss of accomplishments like wages above the general pay scale. Even if the middle-aged generation, with exception of the demoted, is still part of the social system company, they experienced the cutting of jobs, the laying off of trainees and the social benefits – and can compare work climate and the pressure to perform with their experiences from the eighties and early nineties.

The professional level of the gainful occupation is marked by routine and widespread experience. Routine means security and the knowledge of requirements and effects of occupational actions. Especially for bearers the expressiveness of their early occupational years becomes less important and is replaced by routine. The orientation of performance is characterised by ambition and then expectation of professionally challenging work. Oftentimes an increasing specialisation adds in the middle age. They are taught to handle certain subtasks in a very accurate manner or in a very secure way, certain tools with different materials and certain customers in varying market situations. Specialisation and the adaptation of expert knowledge are distinctive attributes of the work in the middle-aged generation. The established usually carry responsibility for personnel and therefore identify with the organisation. The Bearers identify with their tasks, but they rather dissociate from the organisation. Without specialisation and expert knowledge instrumental motivations determine the work orientation of the demoted.

The perspective of the labour market is characterised by a rather defensive strategy of reduction of insecurity. The reached position is regarded to as a protection from competition on the labour market. Furthermore the employees have often acquired special knowledge, which, at least regionally, cannot, or only with a loss, be transferred. The regional mobility is not very distinct, since the middle-aged generation usually carries responsibility for children.

In our sample there are no indicators for a sandwich position (Borcher 1997, Perrig-Chiello/Höpflinger 2001) of the middle-aged generation. The cooperation with the younger generations is characterised by ambivalence, by the simultaneity of support and critical observations. More important than the relations to the other generations are relations inside the middle-aged generation. The internal career paths are positioned with superiors from the middle-aged group and therefore count as „congested“. Established and bearers unify the perception, that chances for occupational advancement are low. As a result the expectation of having to work in the present position for many years develops. These bad occupational perspectives really darken the expectations of the middle-aged generation.

The familial perspective is determined by a life with children and the start of a family. Family means an “own” family, which brings financial responsibility for men and financial dependency for women. The compatibility of work and family, the balance between the two spheres of daily life and the planning of life and career is a decisive topic. Especially for women the decision of having children is also a decision of the occupational career.

In comparison to the orientation of the younger generation one can speak of a reflexive differentiation. Awareness above the limits of occupational and private possibilities is articulated: depending on the interpretation of the accomplishment it is either designative or expectant.

2.5 Profiles of the older generation

The work orientations of the older generation differ from the younger generations in the importance, they attach to the retirement. The end of the working life and the shift to retirement is the status passage, which makes the difference and throws light on the work orientations of the elder generation. Although the retirement age for today's working generation is still 63 years for woman and 65 years for man, retirement is an important subject from the early Fifties. Depending on the economic situation of their company, their personal health situation, their pension aspirations finishing work life often governs the planning of job and private future planning.

2.5.1 Autonomy maintainer

The long term security of economic independence and the up keep of the acquired life standard also after entering into retirement are the decisive impulses for the orientations and strategies of the autonomy maintainer. With that it is meant not only the material standards but also the maintenance of the position in the company hierarchy. The ambition of the sole proprietorship maintainer is directed at securing the personal and material autonomy through success in the career life.

It goes without saying that an autonomy maintainer has to perform reliably and without supervision in his work. Apart from his readiness to perform, strove for autonomy actors of the old generation plays off experience knowledge and routine. The workflow is known. Normally they have also brought their subject know-how to employ in different organisational environments and are familiar with the rules of the game in organisational trade. A characteristic of the sole proprietorship maintainer is his attention for innovation. They use new technical instruments, new hardware or software offensive and without reservations, because they strengthen their competence and secure career independence. The integration of changing social or internal organisational conditions belongs obviously to the maintenance of their professional competence. Autonomy maintainers know their regular clients among the internal and external customers. They participate in further education, which is considered as perpetuating or specialising the acquired competence.

Autonomy maintainers act pragmatic. Career and family crisis strengthen the identification with the goal of protecting the material, career and many times also emotional independence. Their work orientation is expressive. They consider work positive as given and as a chance to take the responsibility for their own life. They scrutinise the growing work challenges as a threat to their sovereignty and counter this threat with openness and further training.

Strove to autonomy maintainers frequently keep distance from interest representatives and trade unions. After long years of employment and long company memberships, the contact partner in the works council and the union are usually personally known. Autonomy maintainers search for cooperation with them by all means punctually. At the foreground stands the demand to solve problems at work independently.

2.5.2 Vested rights preserver

For vested rights preservers the defence of materialistic or symbolic achievements states the most important of their strategical occupational decisions. They are characterised by defensive safety thinking. *You could wait now until somebody feels like doing something else, which is pretty improbable. When you have a secure job, you don't quit. Besides, with 50 years, I wouldn't even know, if we had a chance to get a job somewhere else.* (Volker, 50

years) The position reached in the company and the gratifications that go along with it seem unique, but change usually means aggravation.

Vested rights preservers usually have taken on important positions in the company in their middle age. They have acquired special expert knowledge about procedures, products, instruments or markets and that way build up strong individual negotiating power. Their motivation concentrates on activities to upgrade or defend their position; willingness to be familiarised with new duties or to deal with changed requirements/ new tools is very limited. *You have to deal with things, which are not interesting anymore. You can't really see a sense in that anymore.* (Volker, 50 years) Vested rights preservers try to stay away from new technologies. Only if they see it as a chance, to defend their position, they approach new technologies offensively. Their work orientation is instrumental. Work is seen as a necessity to maintain the standard of living and to fulfil their obligations. There is no distinct occupational ambition (anymore). The time orientation is aimed at the present. That way, the present is supposed to be protected from the expected aggravations of the future. The continuous growing of work pressure is used as a chief witness for the generalised aggravation philosophy of the vested rights preservers. Therefore the future is an important topic, but the expectations are marked by fears and worries.

Collaboration with other generations derives for vested rights preservers from the execution of their expert knowledge and the defence of their position. *Well, the probability of quitting is pretty small, so we are all going to grow old together.* (Volker, 50 years) Basically they see collective actions as a strategy to strengthen their position. Furthermore, as a result of the decreasing implementation, which has been developing for many years, the rhetoric of lobby groups and labour unions in many companies is marked by a defensive attitude and the preserving of vested rights, so that naturally vested rights preservers feel spoken to.

2.5.3 Workaholics

Workaholics identify with their jobs, their duties and their companies. The emotionally important aspects of their lives take place in their work environments. Their personal ambitions are very significant. Mastering challenges in their jobs, climbing up the ladder, the appreciation of their supervisors, perhaps even personal contact to members of the management, those are the things that give their work lives immense emotional density. Elderly workaholics possess expert-, process-, organisational- and experiential-knowledge, they are integrated in networks of policy-makers and often times carry responsibility for employees. They are married with their jobs and often take on more projects than they can accomplish in their life time.

Workaholics are committed to a very expressive work orientation and they experience their consistent adducing of top performances as a great self-affirmation. By doing so they are reaching their absolute physical and mental limits and sometimes even go above. *I have eaten myself up inside. In the rehab I realised: This cannot be the right way. And I changed my ways. Then my wife saw it too: He is willing to change himself. Otherwise it would have definitely failed.* (Manfred, 55 years) They are causing their families and themselves an enormous amount of stress, but negate any complaints. The growing pressure in their jobs is not an issue they want to deal with. Work is a personal challenge for them; the overcoming of difficulties becomes a significant motivation of their occupational actions. Besides their gainful occupation they do not find enough time and attention for their family

The last years before their retirements, their last active years, are considered as the harvest time. Their personal ambition is still strong, but a lot of things run simpler. The workaholics have made a name for themselves in the company, they have grown strong from various conflicts with other employees or supervisors; there is no way around them anymore. *I still am the agent for ergonomics. There have already been statements like: If you did not ask Manfred there is no need to discuss this any further. My judgement about those things is very much appreciated and widely accepted. I have acquired a lot of know-how over the years.* (Manfred, 55 years). Their cooperation with the younger generation is naturally marked by the upcoming pressure of replacements. Nevertheless, foresighted workaholics are prepared, they have gathered a team around them, possess insider-knowledge and have good connections. So as long as it is “business as usual”, there is no way they could get booted out. (...) *Young colleagues show unconcern, where us older ones worry. I even tolerate this for my employees. Trial and error is not the worst of strategies. The more you dare to do something, you have not done before, the more you can enrich something.* (Manfred, 55 years) Handling new technologies is ambivalent. On the one hand they try to maintain responsibilities, on the other hand they delegate duties and that way allow others to build up competence.

When the retirement comes closer, the workaholics expect their replacements to be chosen well in advance. They want to pass on their knowledge before they leave “their world”, expect a young successor who will take on their responsibilities and follow in their footsteps. *That is what I really want to finish up in the rest of my work life. I do not know if I am going to make it, since the time goes by so fast. I only have about four months left.* (Manfred, 55 years) Their private lives are normally also marked by obligations. They take on responsibilities in politics, sport clubs, assemblies or cultural associations. Workaholics follow a life plan, which even includes retirement. The family life is mainly handled by their partners.

2.5.4 Continuous achiever

Continuous achievers identify with their duties and usually with their employers. They are proud of their occupation and their know-how. (...) *that you are procuring security. And I believe that is always a big advantage, when you have been doing the same job for a long time. You are just better than a young colleague.* (Ingrid, 50 years) They carry responsibilities for important duties and are considered high performers in their company. Usually they do not carry responsibility for personnel. They prefer to be right in the middle of the working process, instead of handling dispositive functions. The work orientation of continuous achievers is expressive. They find affirmation in their duties and enjoy gaining recognition for their competence. Professionally, in the organisation and its environment, they possess sovereign competence. *From all the experience that you have, you have seen a lot, you are able to handle situations much better than young people.* (Ingrid, 50 years) Updating their knowledge is self-evident for them, therefore they also look for collaboration with the youth. *In the meantime I gave it to the younger ones. I have been doing it for so many years...now I am pretty happy the younger ones have overtaken it.* (Ingrid, 50 years) In the cooperation with them they aim at exchanging experiential knowledge with current occupational expert knowledge. Concerning new technologies continuous achievers prefer a pragmatical contact. They use their experiential knowledge and their good connection to the younger ones to delegate complex and rarely used practices, while they acquire the use of frequently demanded tools themselves.

Continuous achievers regard to their routine as a basis for their successful work. The professional communication with colleagues, customers and superiors is part of it.

Professional communication is essential for their occupational strategy, which combines high standards of performance with a responsible position and often times difficult work conditions. Their ambition is aimed at a reliable achieving of high work quality in day-to-day business.

The increased requirements caused by the work intensification and the, with growing age, also increasing physical and psychological disturbances, lead to an alienation from work. The incriminating aspects of gainful occupations come stronger to the fore than in younger years. *I thought, when you grow older you can handle the stress better, but that is not the case.* (Ingrid, 50 years) The expressive moments of work orientation remain dominant, but the idea of the instrumental necessity to continue the occupation until retirement becomes more important. Continuous achievers struggle with the decreasing of their labour efficiency, but they know, that they cannot drop out early due to material reasons. They assess the rise of the retirement age and the material aggravation of early dropout offers as an injustice for their generation. They are future orientated, after their retirement they want to realise plans, which they could not realise in their working life.

2.5.5 Career finisher

The professional career of the career finisher is characterised by the building of special knowledge and the overtaking of responsibilities. In many cases the formal appreciation of the overtaken responsibilities does not result in advancement though. *I would really like it, if the company transferred me to the employee section. My occupational goal is simply to have my function be limited to the preparation of work.* (Joke, 51 years) Career finishers in their forties usually have taken on functions, which are ranked higher in the internal hierarchy and have been working in this position successfully for several years. The official advancement is still to come. Career finishers in their last phase of their working life aspire to official acknowledgment and to the take over of a leadership position.

Career finishers have oftentimes had unplanned careers. *I say: What is going to happen with my position? I really want to keep working and pass on my experiences to the young colleagues.* (Joke, 51 years) After many years on the job they expect a formal appreciation of their work in form of advancement. They stand out due to their expressive commitment for performance. They see work as a professional challenge. Their ambition to keep up with organisational and technological changes is strong. They enjoy their work, which leads to a good communication and appreciation for them. The increasing material rewards allow an improved standard of living. The also increasing workload is tried to be compensated by the use of modern work instruments and revised organisational models. The collaboration with the younger colleagues is seen as a chance to pass on experiential knowledge. *The job of a maintenance engineer is my life. Team work is important, I have no problem to help and support my colleagues.* (Joke, 51 years)

Career finishers find satisfaction in their work and identify with their duties, their positions and their companies. Their private and family lives take a back seat to their strong attention and enthusiasm for the gainful occupation.

2.5.6 Older generation: work orientations and life situations

Most significant for the work orientation of the older generation is reliability. Dependency, high commitment for performance and high professional requirements for their work characterise the perspective of older employees. Even after 30 years and more in the job they

still identify with their position and face the professional requirements with exaltation. The increasing pressure to perform is being criticised.

The professional aspects of work orientations for autonomy maintainers and vested rights preservers are mainly characterised by instrumental motives. For autonomy maintainers their work is firstly a means to an end. Vested rights preservers on the other hand defend their work related professional, material and symbolic rights. They do not look for alternatives neither inside nor outside the company. For workaholics, continuous achievers and career finishers expressive motives are dominant. While workaholics and continuous achievers pursue implicit goals with their gainful occupations, career finishers concentrate on their occupational advancement.

The labour side of the work orientation is marked by the stable integration of the elderly in the labour market. Viewing closely we see a contradictory picture. The older generation knows, their position in the company is more secure than the younger ones', but they also know, that there risks on the labour market are higher. In addition they know the disadvantages of their professional specialisation, the competences, which are very hard to transfer. Furthermore they recognise their decreasing health. They see their position on the labour market characterised by high securities and risks. Continuous achievers and vested rights preservers pursue, caused by different motivations, rather defensive strategies on the (internal or external) labour markets. Continuous achievers have found a productive position in the organisation structure and want to remain there, since it meets their experiences and competences. Vested rights preservers defend their professional or organisational position, because they want to avoid a material loss. Workaholics are pushed by their addiction to work, career finishers work toward their planned goals and autonomy maintainers stay offensive occupationally, to reach their goal.

The elderly are open for the new technologies. For autonomy maintainers and career finishers it is naturally to adapt to new technologies for reaching their goals. Workaholics and continuous achievers only use new technologies as far as it is necessary and vested rights preservers only do to secure their expert status.

The connection of work and private life immensely distinguishes the circumstances of the elderly. While some already have their kids "out of the house", others still have to raise little children. The employees of our little sample make their gainful occupation a bigger priority than their private life. The work division in between the sexes is traditional. However, surprisingly men and women, who take on economic responsibilities and the women of our sample, also take care of the household in addition to their gainful occupation.

The collaboration with the other generations is marked by a missing awareness of being "older" or "the old ones" in the company, the older employees do not see themselves as the "Methusalem" of the working world. (Schirmacher 2005) The exit from the working world is variably "far" away. While some are planning their exit fort he age of 55 others rather focus on the age of 61 or 63. The central motive of the cooperation with colleagues of the younger generation is the passing on of experiential knowledge. Hereby the elderly pragmatically admit, that after so many years, they sometimes cannot see the wood for the trees. So the passing on of knowledge is neither seen altruistic nor as a legacy or a present. Thereby a goal is pragmatically pursued. On the one hand the quality of work and the resulting competitive ability of the company is to be secured, on the other hand the elderly expect a reward for it. The passing on of knowledge is an exchange, which is complementary, because different

things are being exchanged: Experiential knowledge against current knowledge, the state of technology. This cooperation of the generations in the company inheres great potential for rationalisation and innovation, because the collaboration of the generations implicates unconcern with experience.

2.6 Work orientations and generational relations

The generational affiliation can hardly characterise the social relations at the work place. It is not the affiliation to an age group or a generation, but the occupational and private life situations, which provide a basis for specific generational relations in the work environment. Our studies also show, that there is no explicit generational consciousness. Even without generational consciousness there are specific situations in the phases of life, which provide a basis for specific generational relations. The time, after graduating or finishing a vocational training, is referred to as the period of occupational entrance. Significant for this period are the search for a job and the access into the company/working world. Tasks have to be handled professionally, independent and with responsibility. The available financial resources increase. The familial situation is characterised by preparing or taking care of the household. Viewing work orientations we see a contradictory situation. The professional side is marked by identification and enthusiasm for challenging occupational goals, by proudness of competence and the quality of the work. The ambitions are strong. Handling IT technology is taken for granted. On the labour side the fear of unemployment and a strategy of minimising risks on the labour market are dominant. So professional self-confidence has a specific connection to the willingness to adapt to changes on the labour market. The time perspective is directed toward the present, planning the occupational and familial future is subordinate. Even after entering the labour market the family of origin still has great importance and the start of an own family is postponed to the middle age. The relation to the older generation is unproblematic. The superiors are usually recruited from the middle-aged generation, they are accepted. The young participants from our sample hardly have any contact to the older generation in their company.

The middle age, between the age of 30 and 50, is more difficult to distinguish than the period of occupational entrance. On the professional side, acquiring expert knowledge and gaining company or customer skills, is significant for leaving the period of occupational entrance. Furthermore the expressiveness of the first years is partially displaced by routine. Routine stands for secureness in occupational decisions. In addition the professional and material limits of the chosen career paths are realised in the middle age. The chances of advancement seem low. Occupational and spatial mobility are not very distinct. Instrumental motives gain significance, because oftentimes economic responsibility for others is taken on. On the labour market defensive strategies are pursued.

The older generation can be distinguished from the middle-aged generation by the fixation on their retirement. The work orientation of the elderly is characterised by the identification with their position, the unbroken high ambition and their big significance for reliability. The labour market is the origin of uncertainty. The occupational specialisation leads to security (on the internal labour market) and vulnerability (on the general labour market). The work pressure is experienced as high and increasing; a threat for the health is also observed.

To determine the relations between the generations at the workplace, we need to distinguish between the different types of work processes.

- Precondition for the solidary relations between the generations are age heterogeneous work processes. Solidary relations can be expected, when the generations really profit from the collaboration. An example for solidary cooperation is the complementary exchange of experiential knowledge and current expert knowledge.
- Age heterogeneous work processes are also a precondition for tensions and conflicts between the generations. Conflicts can be expected, when different requirements of performance and quality become apparent. They can originate from the missing routine in handling technical tools or the missing professional knowledge. Conflicts can be expected inside and between the generations, when the organisation lacks occupational perspectives of development and alteration.
- Speechlessness and generational segmentation are the results of age homogeneous work processes. Without experience in the cooperation with other generations there is a danger stereotypes and prejudices are adopted from the media and constituted as an “opinion”. The overweighing part of our participants has had little experience in age heterogeneous co-operations in their daily work life. Especially the young and the middle-aged generation work among themselves, but rarely with the elderly.
- Ambivalent relations are probably the most widespread form of generational relations in the company. They can be expected particularly in the relations to the younger generations. In many work processes the middle-aged generation also provides the oldest employees. Due to blocked accesses to higher positions, they oftentimes have to remain functions, which do not come up to their experience or their competence. This inconsistency between expectations and perspectives of advancement should lead to a fluctuation between solidary relations and conflicts

Which work orientations can be seen as a resource for which model of social relations between the generations? Which work orientations inhere potential for tensions between the generations? Those are the questions that we will try to answer in our further analysis. Furthermore the examination, which so far based on the analysis of 16 case studies, will be completed by the missing studies. In the end the results will be discussed in the context of current literature.

3. Generations in discourse

3.1 Methodological considerations

The execution, documentation and analysis of group discussions pursue the primary goal of gathering additional information about relations between the generations. The generation and documentation of exceptions, prejudices and arguments, which are expressed about the relation of generations in the public sector, stand in the foreground.

To find participants diverse ways were chosen. Very successful was the enquiry at a staff association of a car manufacturer (Group discussion A), at the manager and the staff association of a local transportation company (Group discussion B) and at an educational institution (Group discussion C). The group discussions lasted between 60 and 120 minutes,

they were moderated by a scientist and documented by another scientist. A questionnaire anonymously surveyed the biographic data of the participants.

3.1.1 Research questions and strategies of determination

Group discussions have not the task to collect individual attitudes or interpretations. The task is to collect collective interpretations, interpretations of a more than individual character. Focus is the non-public opinion to be differentiated from the public opinion. As an example: the public opinion speaks of the war of generations, in the non-public opinion they do not speak of war, perhaps of some conflicts. So the non-public opinion is often an informal group opinion, a consensus over a certain theme; a consensus that is mediated by group control. The discussions should be authentic and naturalistic

The group discussions are to answer the following questions:

- Which topics are relevant for the different age groups?
- Which arguments and exceptions are articulated in the public discourse?
- How is the feedback in the discussion? Which arguments and exceptions are basis for a consensus, which have potential for conflict?

3.1.2 Organisation and participants

In the summer of 2007 group discussions with employees in two companies were arranged. There was one discussion in each company and a third was executed during a lecture.

- Group discussion A: Six employees between 41 and 62 years old took part in the discussion. The dialogue partners have been employed with unlimited contracts as customer agents or as machine operators for many years. Four of the six participants have a family and kids, which have partially already moved out the parents' house. The company has around 70 employees working in a continuous three- shift-system.
- Group discussion B: The group discussion has six male participants between the ages of 21 and 55. They are occupied in the production of a big component supplier for automobiles. With exception of the youngest participant, they have been working with unlimited contracts for a long while, they are married and have children. The younger ones are motor mechanics, the elderly are engineers.
- Group discussion C: The group consists of nine women and three men between the ages of 46 and 74. The biggest partial group has seven participants around the age of 50, more precisely between 46 and 53 years of age. Besides, there are three participants between the age of 60 and 62, as well as two participants with the age of 73 and 74. Five participants have children, but none of the children are still living at home. There are three participants with an occupation, two are unemployed and seven have already retired. There are participants without professional education, occupationally qualified participants with a vocational training in industrial art and processing and graduates from master schools, colleges and universities. One of the participants came as a migrant labourer to Germany.

3.1.3 Procedure and contents

At the start of the discussion the project itself and the scientists are introduced. Thereby the goals of the group discussions are defined.

The starting point of the discussion is reading and visualising four certain statements. Those statements are supposed to be an incentive for discussions. By doing so a strategy of provoking controversial statements is pursued. The statements are to polarise and to locate the younger and older generation in confronting positions. The statements are excerpts from narrative passages in the interviews.

- *These young folks can't really work hard anymore.* This statement about the low commitment of the young generation really accommodates the old prejudices of the effeminacy comparing the generations.
- *The elderly are slowing down the progress.* It shows the association of progress and youth and documents the stereotype of elderly holding back the progress or insisting on using established methods.
- *Experience has no value anymore these days.* This statement broaches the issue of the loss of significance of experiential knowledge in comparison to expert knowledge.
- *The elderly inhere the secure positions.* The proposition relates to the special treatment seniors receive regarding job protection; the longer the employees have been occupied the better the job protection becomes.

3.2 Topics and characteristics of intergenerational discourse

3.2.1 “The elderly are slowing down the progress”

The **topic** progress in the working environment can be understood as technical progress, as the introduction of new methods and tools. Progress itself is not broached as an issue. The consequences of technical progress take centre stage:

- Improved health protection and the discharge of harmful functions.
- Work intensification.

Leadership questions, associated with the use of new techniques, also find great attention. Viewing closely, the conflicts between the generations emerge as conflicts between levels of status and hierarchy. Merely preferring young employees, when granting chances for qualification, actually indicates discrimination of the age. Viewing the relations between the generations the following **arguments** are used:

- Health protection is a topic for the elderly
- Corporate learning and a cross-generational exchange of experiences do not exist anymore.
- Changes in the work environment usually represent a discomfort
- Young employees are preferred in the qualification

With these arguments the participants speak about diverse expectations of the technical progress for the different generations. Of special importance for the relations between the generations are corporate learning and the cross-generational exchange of experiences. Assuming that corporate learning inheres great potential, it is supposed to be activated to monitor the technical progress.

Declining the original statement is a consensus of all the participants. Other attributions though are controversially discussed. Summarised, it is not the use of technology in the work process itself, which divides the generations. Only the political or organisational embedding of technical innovations into specific contexts and the different amount of resources respectively, identify the generational affiliations as criteria for differentiation and discrimination.

3.2.2 “These young folks can’t really work hard anymore”

The discussion of the decreased ambition of the younger generation concentrates on the following topics and arguments:

- Physical work has lost importance compared to the past
- The working moral has decreased
- The work requirements increased
- The elderly do not pass on experiential knowledge
- With growing age the efficiency decreases
- Personal computers change the character of work
- The young people do not have discipline anymore, they do not pursue any goals and do not fight for their economic independence
- Community orientation and awareness of the reciprocity of social interaction absolutely dwindle away with the youth

The original statement is differentiated and transferred into a reflection of the alteration of the character of work. As a standard an implicit comparison to an undefined point in the past is usually used. The alterations are concretised with the loss of importance of physical work and a gain in importance of computer work. This states a basis for interpreting the loss of working moral, discipline and goals of the young people. The descriptions were oftentimes very critical regarding modern times and pointed out the loss of community orientation and reciprocal relationship patterns.

The evaluation of the original statement shows, depending on the generational affiliations, different degrees of agreement. While a predominant part of the elderly agrees to the statement, the younger ones counter by referring to a blocked access to experiential knowledge, as well as missing economic motivation for the gainful occupation. It may not be forgotten, that only few young people participated in the group discussions.

3.2.3 “Experience has no value anymore these days”

In the discussion of the value of experiential knowledge in the work environment the following topics and arguments emerged:

- Experiential knowledge plays a major role when dealing with customers and colleagues
- Appreciating experience leads to respect and the respect has lost importance
- Speechlessness between the generations increases

- Experiential knowledge is displaced by the documentation of senior experts
- Experiential knowledge should be transferred by mentoring

Experiential knowledge and respect are seen very diverse by the participants. On the one hand, when dealing with customers and colleagues, experiential knowledge still has lots of importance. On the other hand, viewing technical processes and decisions, a transfer to documentary systems is present. This documentation allows the younger ones to make good decisions without having had long periods of gathering experience. This transfer is seen critically and an intergenerational exchange between the colleagues is demanded. The original statement finds acceptance. This acceptance results from two parallel progressing developments: From the loss of respect in the work environment and in public, as well as from the transfer of experiential knowledge into technical systems.

3.2.4 “The elderly inhere the secure positions”

In the discussion about the unequal distribution of risks of dismissal between the generations the following topics and arguments were identified:

- The younger ones bear a higher risk and have less expectations for benefits
- Just like the young ones the elderly also have to accept social aggravations
- The family cannot overtake the social validation
- The elderly are being pushed out the company
- The younger ones have less chances of advancement than the elderly used to

3.3 Topics and arguments, consensus and controversies

Before summarising our observations of the generational discourse two important limitations have to be mentioned: The participants of the group discussions were hardly young and mainly male.

In the discourse of the character of relations between the generations in the work environment we can detect binding as well as dividing powers. However, the most important result is, that generational affiliation itself cannot be seen as criteria for differentiation. Generational affiliation is seen as secondary criteria for differentiation, which only gains creative power, by the embedding of actors into political or organisational contexts and the related diverse amounts of resources. The alteration in the work environment, the cutting down of jobs requiring physical skills and the adding of new jobs requiring computer skills, lead to a change of the concept of performance. This change seems to state the material basis for the allegation of effeminacy towards the younger generation and is accompanied by the reproach of decreasing discipline and working moral.

Due to the loss of importance of experiential knowledge resources, which gave respect and authority to the elderly, have become less significant. Experiential knowledge is a very complex term; its content cannot be forced into certain technical systems. *“Experiential knowledge cannot be gained over night.”* For this reason and to prevent access to their knowledge, the participants demand procedures for the secure passing on of their knowledge. This represents an important connection between the generations in the company. The

technical progress is not questioned. The statement, the elderly would hold back the progress, is not agreed to.

Viewing business cultures we can detect the loss of common cross-generational experiences and community orientations. In the groups with mainly average and old participants, we could observe criticism about the loss of respect in the work environment. The loss could explain the feelings of decreasing solidarity amongst the employees, even though historic reference or a measurement for validation could not be obtained in the discourse. It indicates generational segmentation and can lead to disruptions between the generations. In contrast the different demands of the generations for social benefits are documented, but not controversially discussed. This could be explained by the low participation of young employees.

4. Conclusions

4.1 General view on work orientations

- We find in our sample mainly expressive work orientations. Impressive is the differentiation of the expressivity.
- Instrumental work orientations are present only with some interviewees that have furthermore a discontinuity in their professional or familiar life course.
- Women without children or with adult children have mainly similar social patterns of relationship to work as men.
- The interviewees in general do not show any political commitment or serious concern with trade union questions neither do they seem to be involved in initiatives on the level of civil society.
- There are no indicators of an explicit conflict of generations.
- The different age groups do not seem to have a consciousness of being a generation.

4.2 Targeted view on generations and work orientations

The young generation's professional side is marked by identification and enthusiasm for challenging occupational goals, by pride of competence and the quality of the work. The ambitions are strong. On the employment side many fear unemployment and show a strategy of minimising risks on the labour market. So professional self-confidence has a specific connection to the willingness to adapt to changes on the labour market. The relation to the older generation is unproblematic. The superiors are usually recruited from the middle-aged generation, they are accepted. The young participants from our sample hardly have any contact to the older generation in their company.

The middle generation is acquiring expert knowledge and gaining company or customer skills. Furthermore the expressiveness of the first years is partially displaced by routine. Routine stands for security in occupational decisions. In addition the professional and material limits of the chosen career paths are realised in the middle age. The chances of

advancement seem low. Occupational and spatial mobility are not very distinct. Instrumental motives gain significance, because oftentimes economic responsibility for others is taken on. On the labour market defensive strategies are pursued.

The work orientation of the elderly is characterised by the identification with their position, the unbroken high ambition and their big significance for reliability. The labour market is the origin of uncertainty. The occupational specialisation leads to security (on the internal labour market) and vulnerability (on the general labour market). The work pressure is experienced as high and increasing; a threat for the health is also observed.

4.3 Generations in discourse

Generational affiliation itself cannot be seen as criteria for differentiation. Generational affiliation is seen as secondary criteria for differentiation, which only gains creative power, by the embedding of actors into political or organisational contexts and the related diverse amounts of resources.

In some branches there is a loss of importance of experiential knowledge resources, which gave respect and authority to the elderly. In other Branches the loss of experiential knowledge is bitterly felt because of the missing of elderly workers (early retirement) Furthermore the management must recognise that its content cannot be forced into certain technical systems – above all computer-based documentation.

Viewing business cultures we can detect the loss of common cross-generational experiences and community orientations. In the groups with mainly average and old participants, we could observe criticism about the loss of respect in the work environment. The loss could explain the feelings of decreasing solidarity amongst the employees, even though historic reference or a measurement for validation could not be obtained in the discourse. It indicates generational segmentation and can lead to disruptions between the generations.

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Chapter 5: report from Hungary

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1. Narrative life-story interviews in our context

1.1 *The interview technique in theory*

1.1.1 Work and identity – The interpretation of the research topic in relation to the interview technique

Relation to work does not only mean those conscious and verbalisable thoughts of the individual, which he/she can overtly tell about when answering a direct question. Work, our relation to it, is part of our identity. For the two main aspects of identity Ricoeur (RICOEUR) uses the terms *idem* and *ipse*. Instead of the French terms, he translates them into, we could say, ‘sameness’ and ‘selfhood’ in the English, where sameness is the “external” aspect of identity while selfhood is the “internal” one: sameness refers to me as others can see me; selfhood is what I feel, who I am. The first can be understood mainly from the “data” of someone’s life, the second requires a deeper approach, as it is influenced, or rather based on partly unconscious elements of the mind. Relation to work is also part of our selfhood. It is impossible to really understand it without it. Hence, the research exploring relation to work also explores identity; the question of relation to work is dealt with in the framework of the whole personal identity.

1.1.2 The method itself – The way of conducting a narrative biographic interview

Taking these thoughts as the basis for deciding how to conduct our interviews, we decided on using the narrative biographic interviews in a strict sense (ROSENTHAL 1993, ROSENTHAL 1995). The core of this technique is to establish a situation, where the interviewee produces his/her own self-narration, which is not influenced by anyone else’s thoughts, beliefs, views of the topic, etc. Of course, we are aware of the fact that any interview situation is artificial in a sense and we cannot forget about the influence of the interviewer’s presence. The interview is always a common product of the two persons present, it is born in their communication – still, it is possible to minimise the influence of the interviewer. And in order to understand our interviewee’s selfhood, we have to minimise it. We have to allow our interviewee to build up his/her narrative identity through the process of storytelling. Nevertheless, it is not possible to tell one’s life-story without a focus: you have to have a “leitmotif” that guides you while selecting the experiences of life you tell about. And this is the starting point of our narrative biographic interview: we tell our interviewee the theme of our research and we ask him/her to tell his/her life-story.

After the unstructured life-story, several structured questions were also posed which aimed to gain insight into, and further data, on key areas of the research, which may not have come up during the interview.

1.1.3 The uses of the method – Possibility to grasp narrative identity and healing effect

There are two benefits of this process: we gain a narrative that is almost completely produced by the story-teller on the one hand, and instead of creating a situation through questions based on our external ideas or interpretations of the things heard, we offer our interviewees a possibility to work on their narrative identity (Rosenthal, Vajda), which produces a healing effect on our interview partner, beside us gaining knowledge. As this process has arrived to an end and we still feel that there are important unanswered questions related to our research topic, we ask direct questions only at this phase.

1.1.4 Interpretation – Hermeneutic case reconstruction in theory

Rosenthal (Rosenthal 1993) interprets the interviews on a theoretical basis gained from “Gestalt-psychologie”, whereas the text gained by her method of conducting the interviews allows us to interpret it on a psychoanalytic theory combined with the above-mentioned differentiation of aspects of the self of Ricoeur (Ricoeur), as the text produced can be “handled” in different ways. The most important from the psychoanalytic point of view is that we can look at both, the conscious and the unconscious message of the text, the manifest and latent text, if we borrow the language of the Freudian dream-theory.

Life-narration is of course not just the same as telling a dream. Still, it has elements that can be interpreted as fiction and others, that as non-fiction. However, there is no point in searching for the truth: first of all it would require answering the unanswerable theoretical/philosophical question what truth is, and even in case we decided we handled the question as it is normally done in criminal law, we are neither the police, nor the secret service – we do not want to poke in our interview partner’s life. We have to accept the story as it is told. But we can separate the information on events and the experience. We can interpret the series of events of one’s life from the outsiders’ point of view, reconstructing in a sense the ricoerian sameness, and can look at the way experiences are told: we can analyse the line of association flowing through the text and the lingual manifestations of emotions occurring while telling the story. These allow us to gain an insight into ones unconscious reactions evolving which leads us to the understanding/interpreting the construction of the story-tellers selfhood.

Our interpretation, however, does not only have a psychoanalytical/philosophical basis. It is hermeneutic in the sense that after taking into account newer and newer items of the information we re-interpret at first the life history, and later the life-story of our narrator we draw hermeneutic circles. Both, the life-history, the history we reconstruct on the basis of the consecutive biographic data of the interview and the life-story, the story we reconstruct on the basis of the consecutive text-sequences of the narration allow us to understand the different aspects of our interview partner’s identity and their conscious and unconscious structures.

1.1.5 Interpretation – Hermeneutic case reconstruction in practice

Our interpretation itself consists of four main steps:

- biographic analysis and the reconstruction of the life-history, the story lived
- sequential analysis and the reconstruction of the life-story, the story told
- the comparison of the story lived and the story told
- fine analysis of text-segments chosen according the unclear points of the comparison.

Summarising these four will we arrive to the reconstruction, to the complete interpretation of the case.

Biographic analysis

As a preparation of this step, we have to collect all the data mentioned. There are hundreds of ways of telling one's own story of life. Still, it will contain a lot of data that we can single out and order chronologically, though it can be difficult to decide what to consider data and what not, how detailed we should be when collecting the data. In the end, we will have a list of data that we can look at as a more or less complete list of facts of one's life and consider it as a basis for reconstructing our interviewee's life history. As the selection of data mentioned out of the "complete data-set" of ones life is his/her, it cannot absolutely be considered as being free from the influence of ones own experience of his/her own life. Of course, it is not, and there is no set of data, that we could regard as the one that "objectively" accumulates everything, ones life consists of. Of course, there is no "objective" reconstruction of ones life history. Still, the life history we can reconstruct from these data compared to those we would reconstruct in the next step. Still, it is always a difficulty of the practice what to call data and what not. Besides, the detailedness of the selection affects the deepness of our analysis. In case we only take into account the so called "hard data" normally used in quantitative sociology, which means, that do not care for the "just personal" experiences, i.e. changing school we reckon as a data, but getting a slap in the face from a father, who never hits, certain elements we will just consider as part of the life-story, though they surely effect life-history (and sameness) as well.

To be able to analyse the data as life history, we have to order them chronologically. A chronologically ordered set of data provides us the possibility to look at the consecutive events of ones life starting at the first mentioned data (which can, however, be well before ones birth) and form hypotheses, how the next data can effects ones life and what do we assume, how this life can continue afterwards. By forming different hypotheses, that might even contradict each other we gain an understanding of ones history in such a depth, otherwise we could not: we not just conceive, what has happened, but also gain a comprehension of the horizon of the possibilities the person was facing. Hence, the analysis at this point requires different familiarities, proficiencies, as it has to be based on social-historical and psychic knowledge and empathy.

Analysing step by step the whole set of data, we will get a scheme of ones life, we will understand the main themes and decision mechanisms of it, which we can formulate as the reconstruction of the life-history.

Sequence analysis

As preparation for the sequence analysis we cut the typed version (typed according to the rules given in Annex I.) of our narrator's narration into text-sequences, according to the rules given in Annex II. As the text is cut, we make a list of the sequences containing the content and the type of the sequence and its length.

This list allows us the same sort of hermeneutic analysis we carried out in the biographic analysis: we can form hypotheses, what the message of the text sequence is, what did our interview partner want to "cipher" by telling us at the given point of the text. Of course, this is the point, where we mostly rely on psycho-analytic thinking, as here we see the way, the different themes and topics follow each other, which can have messages about the unconscious processes taking place in the background. And the complete analysis of the main narrative – the complete narration, given as the first answer to our initial question asking for the life-story – will give us the chance to formulate, what we understand the message of the narration was, what are the main points of our interviewee's self-definition and narrative identity. And the summary of these thoughts will give the reconstruction of the life-story we heard.

Fine analysis

The aim of fine analysis is to go as near to the text as we have never done before. We neither look at the data only collected from the narrative that concern only the manifest level of the text, nor just the information provided by the structure of the story told, but we look at the text itself together with all its details, all the silences, break-s, stuttering, laughter, etc. By doing this we will again get information from analysing the psychic happenings during the process of the story-telling, the emotions that come up, of course in the context of the information told. Of course, these emotions evolve on the basis of both the feelings present at the time itself of the event narrated about and how our interview partner thinks and feels about it now. In our analysis we will try to understand both, past and present, and also the way, they influence each other. How the past event and the emotions of that time influence the present way of looking at them, and how backwards, the present day standpoint, the self-definition of today influences the way of remembering the past.

To be able to achieve the goals mentioned in the previous paragraph we just chose text-sequences that are either unintelligible at a first glance, or connected to topics, where the comparison of the lived and told story is not complete, where we feel that our understanding has still unclear points. The method of this step is in a sense the same as the previous ones. We go round and round the same kind of hermeneutic circles, though the material we analyse will be the chosen text-sequences, cut into much smaller bits, than before. We practically look at the text word by word.

1.2 The interview in practice

1.2.1 Work and identity – Translation of the research topic into an initial question of the interview

The initial question, as it was shown above, is a decisive point in an interview. It has to be clear and understandable and it has to refer to the topic we want to hear about. In many cases, where we are interested in a group's identity, it is quite simple to formulate such a question,

for example it may be enough to refer to the interviewee's belonging to a specific (minority) group, and that is, why his/her life-story is asked about.

We found the topic 'work' more difficult to put into an initial question. We felt that if we wanted to get a narrative, then we would need to explain a bit more, which would bring in one's relation to work and the conflicts he/she has in relation to it. That is why we decided to say a few sentences in advance: we referred to the series of changes that have taken place in the world around us (transition, information society), which affected the world of work, highlighting that this is why this topic is interesting for our research. Following this introduction we asked the interviewee to tell us about his/her life-story in this context.

1.2.2 The sample

As of course the size of the sample in a qualitative research cannot be large enough to be representative, we decided to interview groups that were in a sense homogeneous. We decided to try to find interviewees in three different sectors of the labour market: IT technology, industry, agriculture. Transition affected these sectors quite differently, partly because their previous history was also different.

Before WWII Hungary was mainly an agricultural country. However, as the ideology of the socialist period was based on the working class, there was a need to create one. It was created by massive industrialisation. Peasantry, on the other hand, was not favoured by the system and was forced into cooperatives only few years after splitting up large estates and distributing them among the peasantry. Yet, when the Kádár regime attempted legitimising itself through allowing a relatively high level of consumption in the late 1970's and 1980's, private farming was permitted in the form of small-scale agricultural activity and small-scale private economic activity. IT technology, being much "younger" than the other two sectors, developed mainly in late Kadarism in the 1980's and was not affected by the industrialisation and nationalisation efforts of socialism. The IT sector evolved in a period when some sort of private enterprise was already possible and its development in Hungary was parallel to the development of privatisation within socialism and the transition to a capitalist economy.

Beside the above-mentioned selection criteria, we planned to conduct interviews in different generations within one family in order to have the possibility to analyse recurring family patterns in relation to work. However, we were able to carry this out in two cases only, as most of our interviewees either did not have living parents and/or working children, or it was not possible to arrange an interview with their ancestors/descendants for a variety of reasons.

The criterion for Group 1 of people with low qualifications and low educational level was defined differently in the case of the different age groups. In the case of age group 2 and 3 (people over 30, in general), those people were included in the low level/low qualifications group who completed 8 years of primary school or less. With regard to young people below 30, the completion of a three-year vocational training school, or less, was defined as low qualifications/educational level, as there are differences in the value of the certificates received in vocational schools when age groups are taken into account. While before 1989 a skilled worker was appreciated by employers and co-workers, by today the prestige of skilled workers' training has dropped significantly. There is a high number of dropouts in vocational schools, which is due primarily to the content and methodology of the training being inadequate for the changed vocational school population consisting mostly of disadvantaged students.

The next tables summarise the data of our interviews:

Table 1: Summary table of interviewees

	Code	Sex	Age group	Educa-tion	Job	Sector	Family	Child	Notes
1	T25	M	G1	Middle	Technician/blue-collar	Manufacture of communication equipment		0	
2	Zs26	F	G1	Middle	Foreman	Manufacturing of communication equipment		0	
3	B27	F	G1	Middle	Skilled worker/manual worker	Manufacture of pharmaceuticals	Single	0	
4	G27	M	G1	High	Assembly worker/manual worker	Manufacture of communication equipment	Single, lives with mother	0	Son of J54 Case study
5	H28	F	G1	High	Maintenance manager/white collar	Manufacture of cement	Married	0	Trade union activity
6	A28	F	G1	Middle	Administrative assistant	Manufacture of ceramic goods/Local government representative	Cohabit	0	Active community life
7	S28	M	G1	High	Control manager/financial	Manufacture of cosmetics and cleaning Multinational company	Married	0	
8	Je30	M	G1	High	Manager at dairy farm	Agriculture	Married	2	
9	Sz31	M	G2	High	IT specialist	Non-profit	Cohabit	0	
10	P31	M	G2	Middle	Web designer	Own IT small and medium sized enterprise (SME)	Single	0	
11	R31	F	G2	Middle	Financial administrator	Local government	Married	2	Self-made woman Case study
12	Á32	F	G2	High	Helpdesk operator	Public sphere, IT department	Cohabit	0	
13	M37	F	G2	Low	Inactive, on disability pension	-	Married	1	
14	Má38	F	G2	Middle	Overseer	Manufacture of food products	Married	2	Trade union activity Case study

15	F38	M	G2	Middle	Overseer at dairy farm	Agriculture	Married	2	
16	B40	M	G2	Middle	Repairman	Public transport	Married	1	Trade union activity
17	L40	M	G2	Low	Unemployed	-	Single	0	
18	K42	M	G2	Middle	Ceramist	Manufacture of ceramic goods	Separated	4	Local government representative, active community involvement
19	K51	M	G3	High	Engineer, previously driving instructor	Car industry	Married	4	Career broken by socialism
20	Il52	F	G3	Middle	Trade union secretary and works council representative	Manufacture of food products	Single	0	
21	P52	M	G3	High	Self-employed software development specialist	Own SME in IT	Married	3	Case study
22	A52	F	G3	Middle	China decorator	Manufacture of ceramic goods	Married, unemployed husband	2	Trade union activity
23	Iv53	M	G3	Low	Bus driver	Public transport	Married	2	Trade union activity
24	J54	F	G3	Middle	Unemployed	Previously food industry	Widow	1	Mother of G27; psychiatric problem Case study
25	Ny57	M	G3	Middle	Social administrator	Social administration, previously print and publishing	2nd marriage	2 own + 2 of the wife	
26	L58	M	G3	High	Product development specialist	Manufacture of ceramic goods	Married	2	
27	J58	M	G3	High	Entrepreneur, company manager	Own agricultural SME	Divorced	2	

Table 2: Interviewees by age group, family status and level of education

	Family				Level of education			Total
	Men No child	Men Children	Women No child	Women Children	Low	Mid	High	
< 30	3	1	4	0	0	4	4	8
30 – 50	3	3	1	3	2	6	1	9
> 50	0	6	1	2	1	4	4	9
Total	6	10	6	5	3	14	9	27

	Level of education			Total
	Low	Mid	High	
Women	1	8	2	11
Men	2	6	8	16
Migrants	-	-	-	(6)
Total	3	14	10	27

2. Results gained from individual interviews

In the course of analysing the interviews we have found 3 main types of approach to work. In the first case, stress is on creativity at work, where work can be a source of joy and working life can be more or less well integrated into private life. However, there are big differences within the type, which led us to form subtypes within it. The differences are caused mainly by generational differences, which also imply differences in the historical context, which decisively alters working conditions one has to cope with.

Our second type consists of those who are not happy with their work, yet they see it as a meaningful activity, which provides the necessary existential basis of life. In their case work is more like an obligation.

The third type consists of those, for whom work is just a nuisance. People in this group would be much happier if they could avoid working.

Below we describe the 3 types and their sub-types, as well as bring case studies and short summaries of the interviews to illustrate them.

2.1 Type 1: Work as a source of fulfilment

My work is my hobby. I have never entered my workplace looking forward to the end of working hours. I just love to do it.

Creative, active; work is about creativity; they are able to talk about their jobs with enthusiasm; family, hobby and work do not separate in their lives but form an integral part of it. Those, whose identity is partly based on their work, happily tell their story of success but even their failure; work is a source of joy which can provide a feeling of success; there is a clear-cut identification with work, sometimes even at the expense of family or private life; individualised life course; work is central, relation to it is reflexive. In agriculture

K42, man, china decorator and designer

Kristóf was talented in drawing and was spotted out by his arts teacher who recommended that Kristóf should utilise this ability of his. He studied china decorating at a vocational school and after its completion he began working at the china factory in the nearby. At the beginning he worked in mass production but after a couple of year he was placed in another department where he was working on new models and designs. Kristóf completed his baccalaureate through a correspondence course but did not apply to the applied arts college in Budapest, despite encouragement from his bosses. He set up a small studio in his flat as well and does extra work there after work in the factory. Beside his work at the factory and in his studio, he does community work as well, and is also a representative in the village council.

According to our experience this group was very much affected by “history”, as on the one hand, exhibiting a certain political attitude could cause conflicts with the communist regime in the sphere of work. On the other hand, the fall of the regime and the new economic system that ensued brought with it new situations that people in the active age groups had to cope with. Consequently, we had to split this group into special subgroups in light of these factors in the case of the older generations, whereas the younger did not have to face such problems. Thus we can arrange interviewees with basically similar attitude to work in the following 4 subgroups according to age and how their experience of communist times affected their life course.

2.1.1 Type 1a: Career broken by communism

This type represents interviewees who had some conflict with the regime which made it impossible for the person to go on and prompted him/her choose a job where he can avoid confrontation with the main trends of socialism. In this case private life gets priority.

Case study: K51, man, engineer, 4 children

Kálmán was born in Győr, a city on the border with Austria, as the second child of the family. His brother is already 6 at the time of Kálmán’s birth. On the mother’s side the family is of Austrian origin with ties to Vienna. During the Second World War the mother and the grandmother flees to Germany. Upon their return to Hungary, they are put on Kulak list⁶⁴. Later on the mother worked as an administrator for the state-owned electricity provider company in the Northern Transdanubian region. The father was a prisoner of war in Russia

64. Peasants owning plots of land over the defined limit (generally 35.5 acres) were considered “Kulaks”, enemies of the communist society. Apart from the stigmatization that these people suffered, certain sanctions were also used against them.

during WWII, from where he returned ill – his parents had already died by this time - and has remained so for the rest of his life.

By the time Kálmán was born, things around the family settled so much that in the summers Kálmán's grandmother regularly visited her sister living in Vienna. Kálmán attends kindergarten in the mornings and in the afternoons an old lady looks after him. At the ages of 10 and 11, Kálmán spends 2-2 months in Italy, thanks to his grandmother who arranged this holiday through an Austrian organisation, SOS Kinderdorff. Here he learns German. From then on he regularly attends German language courses as well.

He starts an engineering polytechnic high school in Győr in 1970, while his brother begins his studies at the Technical University of Budapest, the capital of Hungary. During the high school years, he often travels around hitchhiking. His grandmother puts him in contact with a pen pal from West Germany. Kálmán goes on holiday with him and his family to Switzerland. He falls in love with the pen pal's sister but the following summer Kálmán is denied a passport by the authorities, he cannot travel to Germany, therefore they come to Hungary on a visit. They spend 5 weeks together, then four weeks the following year. Finally, Kálmán and the girl break up.

After finishing high school he wanted to study in Dresden, therefore he applied to a university there. However, he ends up enrolling into a technical college in Pécs, Southern Hungary, from where he graduates in 1977. Following graduation, he starts working as an energetician at Győri Keksz és Ostyagyár, a factory producing biscuits and sweets in Kálmán's hometown in Western Hungary. He quits his job after one week and moves to Pécs to join his girlfriend and there begins working as a driving instructor. Kálmán marries his girlfriend a month later. Soon they have a child and Kálmán's family buys a flat for them. His grandmother dies.

Kálmán's second child is born in 1979. Kálmán is forced to complete the mandatory military service for half a year and spends that time away from the family. Two years later he buys his own car and from then on he instructs driving lessons in that. They start building a house in 1988 and their third child is born.

The formerly state-run driving instructing company is privatised after the change of the regime in 1989. Kálmán enters into a lawsuit to be able to buy shares of the privatised company, which he wins. A fourth child is born in 1997, since then his wife has not worked. In 1998 Kálmán quits the driving instruction company, he is unemployed for a while, and then he starts working at AUDI in Győr as a quality assurance engineer.

His father dies in 1999, then in 2004 his brother too. In 2005 his first grandchild is born.

The story is surprising as we see a family, which must have gone through a difficult period after WWII. Integration into society for the presumably middle-class/upper middle-class must have proven difficult. Yet, from 1956 on, the grandmother is able to arrange regular visits to Vienna to see her relatives and she is able to arrange private and organised trips abroad for her grandchild with the goal of learning a language. What is also surprising that they do not have difficulties acquiring passport for these trips, which was often impossible for Hungarians during that period. The family seems to be doing well in terms of finances, as they immediately buy a flat for Kálmán when he gets married at the age of 21. Does it come from the grandmother? Is it her who adjusts herself well to the new conditions of the new system? Or is it her husband, Kálmán's grandfather, of whom we do not have any information?

What happens after that Kálmán, despite the successful and supporting background and the then unusually high-level German he speaks, does not succeed in getting into the university in Dresden but enrolls into a college of low-prestige, even by local standards? After graduating he quits the engineer post early on, instead he starts giving driving lessons, marries his girlfriend and has a child. Why does he want to “get out”? Why does he choose a workplace where presumably there are many other people who “opted-out” and who perform a relatively well-paid job which allows for them a lot of freedom in relative terms, but which is way below their qualifications? What is he trying to escape from? Did he perhaps have bad experiences in college? Or in high school already? Did he feel frustrated that he could not go to Dresden? If he did not get into the university in Dresden, then why is it that he decided to attend a college in the countryside and not a prestigious university? Is it possible that, except his good language skills, he was not even successful?

What characterises the family background, beside the ability to always make do and to adjust, is that they are able to find the loopholes in the system and to reproduce their former, middle-class lifestyle (e.g. a lady looks after Kálmán after staying at the kindergarten for half a day). Is it possible that Kálmán may not like this? Or maybe he did not inherit the ability from the grandmother/grandfather or the parents and work may be a sphere for him where they cannot help? Why does the originally ambitious (as the intention to go abroad in the late 1970’s reveals high ambitions) young man relocate his ambitions into private life? Is it maybe his wish to separate from his family, which prevents him from asking for help and leads to “opting out”? Is it that forming a family suits his striving for independence better?

Then what forces him to “opt back in” after the change of the regime, a move that cannot have been easy for an engineer who graduated 10 earlier and has no professional experience? His knowledge of German must have proved a great advantage for him and his re-integration is obviously successful, as he has remained with the company since he started working there 10 years ago.

How does he himself talk about it?

At the beginning of the interview he focuses on the elements, which we also pointed out, as important: middle-class life-style, half-day kindergarten and the opportunity to learn German. He talks about his grandmother’s adroitness with admiration and as something that carries the message for him that he should not stay in the country. He could leave with the help of the German family as they would help him in getting into university in West Germany and would host him as well. However, Kálmán realises in time, as he interprets it now, that by accepting the support of the German family he would lock himself up in the relationship with their daughter, which he thought was too early for him. Therefore he chooses to apply to a school in East Germany, which is also a breakaway from his own family, and although it provides less freedom than going to West Germany but certainly would have required less adjustment on his part than studying in the Soviet Union. It seems as though distancing himself from the political system had been important, while at the same time he did not want to leave completely.

Following this, he starts recounting his experience with the university early on in the interview, maybe because this was a crucial experience in his life. He talks about his last high school year in a mocking and off-handed manner until he recounts his experience with a teacher: Kálmán’s ironic but innocent remark made at a class sparked off disproportionate retaliation from the teacher and the school. A school commission was convened to discuss the

incident but the most important consequence of it was that the recommendation letter, prepared by the school and needed for his application to the university in East Germany, turned out to be a “condemnation” letter and depicted him as inappropriate to represent Hungary in the German Democratic Republic. As he recounts the story, his terror and dismay at the fact that his innocent remark unleashed such severe retaliation bearing consequences for the rest of his life, become palpable. He also talks about the painful experience he had when he appeared in front of a commission in the last round of the application process, to which only 30% of the applicants were able to get in, when he was read the characterisation given by his school, not recommending him for studying abroad and was rejected.

What could have happened here? Was he humiliated? Did he come to realise that he was deemed ‘politically inadequate’, maybe because of his family? Kálmán did not think anything could have caused a problem at this stage of the application process and he was not aware how unpredictable the system was and how easy it was to misuse power within the school. If this part of his story had been analysed on the level of biography, we may have considered it an attempt on the part of Kálmán to shift responsibility for his failure on somebody else and to embellish the past. This would have been a good strategy, as now everyone would believe anything about the past, let alone for the 21-year-old girl who conducted the interview. However, the way the story is told, its detailedness and the fact that it is filled with emotions, the palpability of the disappointment and humiliation through his words, confirms what he said. When he says “I had never felt so awful in my life” is thus understandable, as what worse could happen to an adolescent boy than others ignoring his real performance and evaluating him on the basis of unintelligible criteria?

As the professional scores he received in the course of the entrance exams were all excellent, he tried to get into higher education institutions in Hungary. He applied to the Technical University in Budapest the capital, where he was rejected even though he met all the professional criteria of entrance.

*Well, once we received a letter [from the Technical University]... To make a long story short, I was not accepted. But ... er ... here there was a score limit which you have to pass in order to be accepted as **today**, the point is that at that, I applied for the major of heat-engine engineer, on that major the score limit, er, was lower than my scores, thus because of, so I did not retake it. Despite this, I was not accepted, who knows why.*

It is surprising but he does not blame the regime here. It seems as if the successful adolescent boy had been broken then by the injustice he had suffered and had accepted that he could do nothing against the regime but accept what it can offer instead of fighting it. What it offered was a place at a technology college in Pécs, a town in Southern Hungary. It seems as if Kálmán had been happy that in the end he was accepted somewhere, although not to a school he wanted to go and not to the major he wanted to be, and that his ordeal came to an end, now he wants to be left alone. He was able to get away from home at least as he had wished.

Would this be the key to Kálmán’s story: that his success lasting up to that point is put an early end to at the age of 18 by the unpredictable and unforeseeable operation of socialism? That even his prudent grandmother was not able to prepare his grandchild for a situation that he came to face? That Kálmán was not sufficiently afraid of school – maybe because he saw that his family usually found the loopholes in the system without getting into conflict with the regime and therefore he may have thought there is nothing he should be afraid of – therefore suddenly he became vulnerable and ousted? Is it possible that he relinquished his desire for a career and for integration at this point, letting himself drift and going to the college in Pécs?

He finishes the college, but he seems to have done it with much less ambition than what he exhibited before, which is indicated by the developments after graduation. He receives his degree but immediately after that he leaves his profession. Maybe he does not want anything from the world any more but wants to achieve things in the private sphere instead.

So my parents found for me a job at the.. factory which suited my qualifications, so it was settled, I applied, sent my application, and what surprise, I was hired. Well, life is beautiful, isn't it? I started on 15 August at the factory as an energetician, newly graduated, young titan, everything was great. One thing was neglected by those poor things, however, that in Pécs I got acquainted with a girl – by way of an excuse, she has been my wife ever since and we have four children and it works. So I came home.. and only with great repugnance was I able to go to work by, on top of everything, 6 a.m. on the 15th. They greeted me kindly they told me I should get used to the atmosphere and the air with the colleagues, and right, it is a workplace. Well, surely those 8 hours passed with difficulty. But the most difficult was the following 8 hours, when I went home at 2 p.m., then, yes, my old friends in have all moved away and it wasn't what I was used to in Pécs, I didn't particularly feel fine at home, then 20 August came ... and a 3 or 4-day long weekend. So then I decided that now I will simply go to Pécs at least for these 4 days. She sang in a choir and they went to perform in Sweden and were coming home for that 3-day weekend, which of course I knew about.. they were taking an express train from Budapest to Pécs, so as an attempt to surprise her, erm, I waited for her at the train station and then it was really very good and approximately then our fate was decided because then we decided that from now on we will not stop it. So by the time we got to Pécs, by then, on the express train, by then practically, we were decided, that from now on we will not go apart.

After recounting his boss' disapproval, he rounds the whole story up:

*So that was it. My parents were not happy about it either. * ((whistle)) Went back to Pécs, weathered the storm. (4) >Well, whatever.<*

“... weathered the storm. (4) >Well, whatever.<”, he is saying, meanwhile it is obviously not “whatever” even today, back then it surely made a difference. On the other hand, we do not know what may have happened to Kálmán at the factory to decide after a week to give up the engineer's career but “follow his heart” to Pécs instead and establish his own family, choose a profession which has lower prestige but may be financially more rewarding, and may also ensure greater freedom and more time for actively participating in family life. Did he suffer any atrocities at the factory during that 1 week? Or was he so dissatisfied with the work? Or maybe he did not even want to go there to work but he was unable to say no to his parents who may have arranged the opportunity? Was it the family backing that he could not accept in getting the job? Or would he have preferred Pécs in order to break away from his family?

The latter seems improbable in the light of the further developments, as he continually accepts the support of his family. In this case it was of course difficult to refuse to take the job their parents arranged for him, even if he really does not want to do it. That may be why he gets married very soon, as this could provide a good cause to which the parents will not say no. Especially if a baby is on its way– and the timing suggests, his girlfriend was already pregnant by the time they got married.

It seems as if, for some reason, Kálmán chose building his family life instead of a career. He did so for an extended period of time: he does not return to his job and profession until the regime change but as soon as the political and economic changes occur, he changes back basically immediately. We cannot think of anything else but that it was his opposition to the regime that made him wait that long. It seems as if he had been so frustrated as a result of his adolescent experiences that he did not feel ready to follow his grandmother in finding loopholes in the system and in manoeuvring but chose to opt out instead. Besides, his

graduation took place at the time of the “Frigidaire socialism”, the consummation of the Kádár era, when in private life one could get on well after such kind of “opting out”, one could even make good money and had a relatively large amount of freedom in his actions as long as politics was avoided. It must have been frustrating for Kálmán not to make use of what he had studied but after a while he may have been afraid of getting back into his profession for fear of not having enough experience.

We could ask instead why it is that later he decided to go back. What made him take on the role of the beginner engineer at the age of 40? The regime change must have played a role in it, together with new opportunities, the fact that AUDI established a factory in Győr, where Kálmán’s German must have been a great advantage. And maybe the feeling that this may be his last chance.

He himself retells the story so that emphasis is put on the animosity he had for the regime:

*So stuff like that happened. But you know, how shall I put it, there is this tension in me because *this was always embedded into this communist crap, you see. So at every moment ((groaning)), you felt that there was something above your head: kind of – So you had to be careful with every word of yours and every action of yours because the eyes of the party were on you, you see. * So somehow this-, you don’t understand this. *So at that time, when they told you not to wear jeans and that you should have your hair cut, so they could fuss about such stupid things. Do you understand?*

*So after that, * that they gave me the hell practically for the rest of my life coz maybe they did not think it over properly but it is certain that this is the point, this had an impact on my entire life, until this very day. Coz maybe if this doesn’t happen, then I finish that university in Dresden and, who knows, what I could have become. * While something completely different became of me.*

He talks about how they made use of the slackening of the regime, what advantages he had as a driving instructor, like how easy it was for him to acquire a car (which for others took years), and the opportunity to steal some of the petrol that was provided for the instructing.

We also learn that he also saw his grandmother as a person who can manage under all kinds of circumstances and can get what she needs:

*My grandmother she was an interesting women, (6) so she is the one who has her * ties and had them * until the end of her life. So * when there were these chaotic times, so there was the war- * Yes, well >it< all started with that they during the war they left Hungary, they went to Germany as refugees. Together with my mother. (3) And when the war ended, then for some stupid * reason, in fact I don’t understand to this very day why they came back to Hungary, (3) instead of laying the grounds for stuff there, because the majority of the relatives are still there, whatever, they came home, but here they had nothing. Moreover, they were put on that kind of list, that ku, I don’t know, this kulak crap. So the point is that they came home to hardly be able to make ends meet but somehow they were able to build a kind of a new existence, so after they were deprived of everything they had, then * they somehow they were able to eke out an existence but what is important is that, so what characterises my grandmother, and that is what I can remember only, that she found the way in these chaotic times, that after ‘56 she was able work it out that she nipped over for 3-4 months to her sister who lived in Vienna. And her sister or sibling had a shop there and she helped out there and elsewhere, so she did not go there for vacation to put it simply, she worked there. So that is why she had all that money that is how she was able to finance our flat etcetera, because there she, as I say, the: how she did it, who knows, because at that time it wasn’t possible to travel West just like that.*

We should not forget about what many workplaces provided under socialism and what was important for family-centred people like Kálmán: that the workplace was a little bit like a family and that work itself was also something enjoyable rather than something requiring huge efforts.

2.1.2 Type 1b: Career broken by transition

Those interviewees make up this type, who cannot cope with the changes brought about by the collapse of the socialist regime. There is some kind of failure in their lives connected to the changes but it is hard for them to talk about it; starting from this point, private life becomes the sphere of “real” life. Such turn of events does not depend on qualifications or education. Narration follows an upward-downward dynamics. One who fails to be at the right place at the right time will fail at work as well, see the case of the IT specialists of 2 generations (easy ascent, then failure in the trajectory of the older person; in the case of the young IT person there is a fast ascent, then failure): they were both pioneers in their field which was sufficient to their progress and success without making too much effort. However they both failed when they should have got onto a higher stage in their business. Learning a new kind of market dynamics can be a problem for some, just like learning new skills for others. Both IT persons had difficulties switching to a business-like approach from their ‘familial approach’. After the change of the regime a large number of enterprises were established on a familial or a friendly basis, which have lost their dominance and receded into the background (see study from the Central Statistical Office) The case studies of the IT specialists attest to this; this may be difficult for those people who consider the unity of family and work important, as the familial character of work recedes as well.

Those people also belong to this category, whose work became precarious as a result of labour market and institutional changes after the change of the regime. They are often referred to as “losers of the regime change”. They are in a different situation than the IT specialists mentioned above, as their trajectories did not show an upward direction prior to the regime change, but work was secure in the pre-1989 years and their life strategies were built on stability and predictability – in this respect the transition represented a break in their life course.

A53, woman, china decorator

Anna attended grammar school and in the afternoons she took part in art groups where they painted and drew. Two years into the school, however, she gets ill and has to skip a year. After recovering, she does not go back to the same school but begins vocational training at a china factory where she gets a job after finishing school. She has worked there since 1972 and has been involved in trade union activity a well for 30 years. With the privatisation of the company, a large number of people were dismissed and there is a constant danger of the company going bankrupt and the employees becoming redundant. Anna’s husband was laid off several years ago. Anna perceives her work as unstable and feels unappreciated at work. There are no other opportunities in the area and as her husband had already been made redundant, she sees no option but to go on and work under conditions, which are not favourable and perform work which is not rewarded enough.

Case study: P52, man, 3 children, IT specialist

Peter is a descendant of a small town family of intellectuals and workers with social-democratic leaning. His parents are not intellectuals but middle-level officers. He has one sister who did not pursue studies, whereas Peter did: after finishing high school, he attended a technical college in Budapest. After his studies he began working in a team specialising in computer technology; they developed their own computer. With this a career sets off: the team gets more and more work in the healthcare system, they develop computer systems for the healthcare. The team breaks up but Peter stays on working in the healthcare system; beside this he also works as an entrepreneur. He got married at the beginning of the successful period of his career; his wife had two children from her previous marriage. They have a common child as well who cannot seem to find his place in life.

We can see that Peter comes from a warm, well-balanced family. A strong bond within the family can be discerned from the fact that he knows a lot about his predecessors: they must have talked a lot within the family. Peter's mother comes from a real social-democrat worker family, where work is a genuine value and the experience of the 'valued worker' has been felt. Moreover, she became a journalist in an era (1945-1948) when she may have experienced that something could be done in the world. On the other side of Peter's family there are teachers in an era when a teacher was much respected.

The parents, starting to work under socialism, bring with them a perception of learning as a value. Although their means did not seem to allow them to study, they attend evening classes – that is where they meet. Thus it must be evident that the child studies as well so that he accomplishes something in life. Peter is indeed successful, presumably he is the apple of his parents' eyes from whom successes is expected, especially given that their daughter chooses not to study but to become a full-time mother.

At the time of Peter's growing up, Budapest was the obvious place to pursue studies; it is natural that he should come there. Notwithstanding, he does know „where he belongs”; he does not want to take a big leap and a college degree suffices him. Then a successful career sets off, in which the importance of personal relationships and the family is apparent: he works in a team and the team is successful. Here the role of socialism may be of importance: the team may have been destroyed by a ruthless capitalism. With the change of the regime comes a rupture in this: the team breaks up and Peter cannot find an adequate place for himself in the world. He can make enough money as an entrepreneur but he is not really successful. Presumably he finds less joy in his work than before.

Breaking up and disruption seem to come out in his narrative. He regrets the team's break-up and that he has to work on his own. He can only enjoy himself in work, it seems, if he has company, if he can be in a „family” there as well. Work carried out this way is a joy, but a nuisance otherwise. He was happy to put in overtime while he was in the team, whereas now what seems to be much more important is to be at home with the family. It would be interesting to find out what he thinks about his son's not finding his place, while his wife's other two kids seem to have achieved a lot, as the importance of the parental home and marriage is voiced in his narrative, therefore it is possible that his son's situation is an important source of his perceived failure. On the other hand the child's drifting is not surprising when it is hard to find a job with only a high school diploma nowadays in Budapest and higher education does not offer many prospects either. The fact that he has recently started working in theatres may be his father's inspiration: to try to do ”something” there together.

Peter is among those who have lost greatly on the change of the regime, although one would have expected him to become a successful entrepreneur. He failed to find the form in which he can reconcile his own need for a team and a for friendly work relations with running an enterprise.

Case study: P32, man, web designer

Pál's grandfather moved to Hungary from Transylvania without having anything during WWII. He settled down in a small village. He studied forestry and then worked as a forester. As child, Pál spent his summers with his grandparents. Pál was born in a big town in the countryside. His father was responsible for newspaper sale at the local post office, his mother

worked as a sales-person in various shops. He has a sister who is two years younger than him. Pál goes to a school of sports focus and then, after they move to another district, he attends a school with Russian specialisation. Around the change of the regime Pál's father acquires ownership in a newspaper publishing company and the family's financial position improves. His mother continues to work for a while but then she stops work and stays at home. Some time later she opens a small shop at the local swimming pool/baths. He begins his studies at a dual language high school, which had recently been established. In his third year he gets a scholarship and spends one semester in the U.S.. After completing high school, he enrolls in a course in American studies at a university in the capital, then after two years he switches to Communications major. Meanwhile, he gets acquainted with the Internet, which one of his professors makes notice of and assigns him various jobs. He designs the department's web site. Through his professor he gets a job at a daily newspaper where he is responsible for the web development of the online edition. In the meantime he breaks off university. He finds a job at another company, also in the area of web development. Here he meets another young man with whom they set up their own web development company. They both leave their jobs and work in their own company. They start small but then the company becomes more and more successful. At one point they employ 7 people. He and the other company founder travel a lot and work is managed by others. They both buy their own flats. A year ago the company went bankrupt when their biggest buyer terminated contract with them. The company still exists on paper but in reality it does not. At the same time with this his long relationship ends as well. Now he lives on small jobs, which his friends get him.

Pál comes from a secure family background, he has good foundations. At the time he started it, going to a dual language high school was considered to be outstanding and good language skills must have been a huge advantage. However, Pál does not choose to pursue a career in this field, he does not follow this line consistently. Instead, his career was formed by chances; seemingly there is no consciousness in it. At the same time he seems to be a person who always grabs the occasion. Looking back on Pál's life course, unfinished university studies stand out: he attempted two courses but did not finish either of them. Pál's parents do not have higher education degrees; they too get by as entrepreneurs by making use of their other skills. Just like in the case of Pál, it is striking in the case of his father as well that he was good at identifying the opportunities of the era and was able to turn his position advantageous by making a successful enterprise out of his activity before. As he attended an elite high school, it was most probably evident for Pál that he should go on to college/university. It seems, however, that he did not have any more concrete ideas or plans in this regard. "Traditional" life-course breaks with the ceasing of his studies; from then on Pál lives his own life (individualisation of life-courses). This is when Internet begins to be widespread; Pál is in the first wave of Internet specialists. With the expansion of the IT sector, his enterprise is prospering as well; like his father he had acumen to know when to change – he was at the right place at the right time. Following years of success, however, his enterprise goes bankrupt along with his private life falling apart as well: his long term relationship ends. If not for his own flat, Pál would be in an utterly precarious situation now.

How does Pál see himself in this story?

For Pál his grandfather is the role model who, starting from scratch, worked his way up to be an active respected member of the village.

He does not view work as work, the borderline between fun on the computer and effective work are always blurred. Work life and personal life are so much intertwined that he lived in

the office for years (not because he was forced to do so, nor because he worked so much as not to be able to go home). Money is not important for Pál but he evidently likes it if things go well and he happily uses the opportunities provided by money. Work in itself does not represent value for him, it is rather getting on well and easily that he values. He is not a nine-to-five kind of person. Already in relation to studying Pál formulated that he lived on what he had ‘picked up’ here and there, and this is exactly what characterises his relation to work.

Independence and flexible work are important for him.

His company was organised on a friendly basis, it was more like a circle of friends for them rather than work. Yet, they could be successful at the end of the 90’s: they managed to catch something at a good time. The basis of their orders was informal relations. After 2000, however, the web design market was restructured and with the appearance of serious companies they lost their customers, as they did not act business-like. Companies organised as ‘circles of friends’ receded into the background.

Pál depicts himself as a kind of person for whom independence, freedom are the most important, together with belonging to a community. Every move of his is made together with others – he establishes his company with his friends, then they include more friends who do not seem to know much about their work, yet this does not seem to be very important. He reveals in the story that he had colleagues who were not friends but he does not talk much about them. It seems to be much more important for him to appear as a person for whom experience and friendship are more important than anything else. It is possible that it is indeed so and the success of his company is due only to a fortunate market situation. In Pál’s opinion the company fails exactly because of this: not being able to transform into a business enterprise from a circle of friends.

Pál is not worried in this current situation either; opportunities came which he did make use of and he did not go after anything, surely this will happen in the future as well. While he tries to present himself as someone who lives his life this way consciously, to the outside spectator this seems more like infantile behaviour.

Precariousness and generational issues do not arise as a problem.

Pál is a typical figure of a generation, which tries to prolong youth indefinitely; for him it is adventure and experiences constitute values.

It is interesting that the same can be observed in the case of the other, older IT specialist we interviewed: a group of friends makes use of novelties, they achieve successes together but then the group is unable to adapt to the changes of the market, the group falls apart and the company gets to the verge of bankruptcy. In both cases the interviewees were inspired by the possibilities provided by the novelties: primarily the fact that they can create something new going off the beaten track. They could not find themselves in a routine work, which lacks these possibilities. It is also interesting that the frameworks of the two life stories are extremely similar despite a difference of 20 years in their ages.

2.1.3 Type 1c: Work as an area of community and solidarity

In the case of interviewees of this type, there is no break in the life course as a result of the change of the regime, yet something seems to have been lost for them, as nostalgia is felt for the times preceding the regime-change. Work life back then is perceived as more familial with more solidarity among co-workers. Middle-aged and older generations talk with nostalgia about the socialist period, particularly about the community, which formed in the factories under socialism, often in course of compulsory community service ('Communist Saturday'⁶⁵, community service, etc.) or in organised community activities (excursions, etc.). Nostalgia for a more united and secure work life is made stronger by the disappointment experienced as a result of unmet expectations for a new system following the change of the regime. (Róbert 1996) Loyalty to the workplace was rewarded and appreciated. (Tóth 2002) Interviewees also spoke with appreciation about working at one workplace for a long period with the workplace/company becoming part of their identity. Interviewees talked of a more intense community life, higher-level solidarity between workers, a feeling of togetherness in the socialist organisation of work. It is a question whether nostalgia is targeted at the integrity of work-hobby-family, which was made possible by socialism, and which was lost after the change of the regime.

Case study: I152, woman, trade union secretary

Ildikó was born in 1955 in a village in Eastern Hungary into a family mainly supporting itself from agriculture: her mother was a housewife who worked on the lands and was a helper at the local church; her father was a worker at the farmers' co-operative and also a bell-ringer at the church. Her parents were over 35 when Ildikó and her brother were born. Ildikó's brother went to secondary school after finishing primary school and became an agricultural technician before doing his military service. Soon after that he married and moved away from home. At the age of 15 Ildikó started working in shifts in a chocolate factory in a nearby town. She completed a vocational school while working, then an economics high school, then a two-year course on industrial relations and human resources (or its equivalent of the time) – all of this through correspondence courses. After six years of working in the packaging department of the factory, she got into the payroll office and worked there for five years. Following that she switched to the human resources department where she worked for eight years. In 1988 she was elected to be the trade union secretary at the factory and she has worked as such ever since.

In the 70's she was secretary of the local Communist Youth Association (KISZ) unit, then she became a Communist Party member as well. She attended courses on Marxism organised at the time (the so-called 'Marxist-university'). As a KISZ member, she attended summer camps and went on excursions around Hungary, as well as to parties organised by KISZ and to competitions (e.g. 'Who knows more about the Soviet Union?').

Ildikó lived with her parents in her home village, whereas her brother moved away in his early twenties after finishing his studies and military service and founded his own family. Her mother died in 1998. The same year Ildikó moved into her own flat in the nearby town, which

65. Introduced in Hungary following Soviet examples, 'Communist Saturday' was "compulsory voluntary" work carried out to achieve some community goal (e.g. renovation of the local kindergarten, cleaning of the surrounding of the company, etc.) but often it was an opportunity for companies to catch up on work in meeting goals set out in the plans.

she bought and furnished over the years. She never married and has no children. With her work she travels a lot both in Hungary and abroad, and holds a position in a sectoral trade union organisation in Hungary and in international trade union and works council organisations as well. Recently she was offered a high position in a European trade union organisation, which she declined to accept.

Ildikó lived at home with her parents for very long even though she had got an apartment in the nearby town – she seems to have been unable to separate from them and the old parents were probably also glad to have at least her beside them and have her take care of them and support them, as their son moved out early. Ildikó seems to have taken on the responsibility of looking after the old parents, which may have prevented her to founding her own. It was only after her mother's death that Ildikó, forty-four at the time, finally moved into her own apartment in the nearby town and started her own life. However it was probably already too late to marry and have children.

Ildikó started working in a factory right after elementary school at the age of fifteen but she did not give up on studying: she completed several schools and several courses besides working. It may be that her parents did not want to let her go on her own way but it is also possible that they could not afford sending her to schools, like her brother, and therefore she needed to work it all out for herself later on. Her desire to study seems to have been boosted by the regime: her career intertwines with the socialist system. Ildikó has come a long way: born into a poor family, which perhaps could not afford to send her to school, she now travels abroad extensively and lives at ease. It is a question whether it is her career or her relationship with her parents, which she had to pay for with her living on her own. On the other hand community and connection with other people seems to be essential to her. She found it in KISZ, which organised events but she also seems to be able to have in her job: as a trade union secretary she is constantly in touch with others and works for the community of workers, organises excursions for others' children.

Maybe as compensation, in her narrative she tries to convey the image of a person who always works things out for herself, a self-made woman, who never wants to rely on anybody else. She never asks anything from others, she claims, and does everything she can for friends, colleagues, relatives, etc. Her mission statement in life seems to be to help and protect others, to take responsibility for others. She is like a benevolent but firm parent who is strict with her children but wants the best for them. Her frustration, however, becomes apparent in the contrast: although she says that she does not need anything from others but she feels hurt when she is not thanked for her efforts.

She is highly talkative and communicative person who tries to convey the image of a very confident and self-assured person, who will go into confrontations to protect her truth and will speak her mind no matter whom she talks to. Her stories are dominated by her stepping-up bravely, by heated debates where she proved something and made others reconsider their views. This is mostly true for both work-related stories, as well as personal ones, making the two spheres almost undistinguishable.

And I got so angry that why do they deny it, that production of this produced was relocated to Hungary, and I had no idea what consequences it might have, but I stood up that then I will tell everyone about it, the CEO, the European president, where production is now, if he pretends not to know it. Then I told them, khm, I beg you pardon but I would like to kindly let inform our dear colleagues and others who are interested that this product has been made in Hungary for the past 2 years under such and such

circumstances, and so on. And then his head turned purple like beetroot and said that it is possible, he was not aware of it.

The fact that she goes to great lengths to demonstrate her self-assuredness and her being right makes us believe that she is far from being self-assured but needs to make sure she appears so and needs to justify herself and her acts to the interviewer, as well as to herself.

From her experiences of the socialist era and the KISZ, she stresses the importance of community and time spent together with fellow KISZ members. Accounts and examples of ‘togetherness’, solidarity, community, and the chance to learn more (be it the history of the Soviet Union or Marxist economic theory) dominate her narrative when she talks about ‘old times’.

... it was so good and there was so much unity between us that it is unbelievable. So (...) the team was so united, and it is so up to this very day, with those who went to work at other company, up to this day we keep in touch, and sit down to talk (...), about family and all, we used to know everything about each other's families. Down to every detail. At the end of months we were at the office from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m.. And really, there, beginning from recipes of cakes ((laughter)) through private life and boys, everything was covered. (...) everyone hated the boss, of course, but not as a person, rather because of what he did as a boss, because we respect him as a person to this very day. We still visit him on his name day, er, and if you meet him, or visit him, or he calls you, so everyone respects him and loves him very much.

The present is described in sharp contrast with the past: it is individualistic, people do not help each other, there is no community among fellow-workers, and former fellow KISZ-members reject their past and have turned to right-wing ideologies, an attitude which Ildikó condemns. The interpreter can ask whether the loss of community is the only cause for her nostalgia: we know that persons who were very active in KISZ had a certain power in their work. We might suppose, this is also a loss for Ildikó, which she tries to compensate for now in the trade union activism.

2.1.4 Type 1d: Work as a domain of development and self-fulfilment

Those young people belong to this type, for whom work is an area of development, where abilities can be shown. Proving one's abilities is an important motivation for them when they pursue their career. They are ambitious and in some respect resemble the so-called generation X, for whom developing skills is of great importance in order to maintain competitiveness. (BOKOR 2006)

In an exceptional case, the tradition of probably the social democratic workers tradition of the grandparents' generation seems to recur in that a poor and poorly educated person makes struggles herself up. It seems very exceptional today, as this tradition was mostly put an end to by socialism.

Individualised life-course and a reflexive relation to work characterises this type.

Á32, woman, helpdesk assistant

Ágota works as a helpdesk assistant in a public institution. She was born in the North-east of Hungary in an old centre of heavy industry, now the centre of an economically depressed region with rampant unemployment. Ágota's father worked as an electrician in a mine, her mother as an administrator. Ágota has a twin sister, with whom she shares the same educational path: they go to a secondary school of metallurgy in their hometown, a school mostly attended by boys. Upon completing the school, they start an IT course at a college in Central Hungary, where they live in a dormitory. They graduate as IT engineers. After graduation, Ágota was unemployed for a year although she applied to many jobs.

When she finally got a job, first in a bank as an administrative person, then as an IT assistant at various companies in Budapest; in the meantime she decided to pursue another degree in economics. She was hired to be the network administrator at a museum but she also had to perform administrative and secretarial duties as well. She worked in a local government for a couple of months before she found work in a support institution of one of the ministries, where her job is insecure as a result of the government's attempt to streamline public administration. She feels that because of her sex, she is not taken seriously as an IT person and because of the administrative duties she was assigned to prevent her from developing herself. On the other hand she lays great emphasis on improving her skills in trying to make herself more competitive and marketable: she enrolled in a language course; she reads journals on her field; etc.

S28, man, account controlling manager

Sándor was born in 1979 in Budapest. His parents got divorced when he was 3. Sándor stayed with his mother who soon moved in with another man. He is a younger sister in her mother's new family and a younger sister and brother in her father's second marriage. From the age of 12 to 15, he lived in the United States as his step-father got a research scholarship in an American research institute. Having returned home, he attended an alternative high school specialising in economics, after which he graduated from the College of Foreign Trade. At first he worked in a bank, then he started working for a large multinational company where he has worked for the past 7 years. At present he is in a mid-level managerial position. His choice of career is closer to his father's who is a communication expert in a company, whereas his mother and step-father are psychologists. With regard to attitudes, he differentiates himself from her mother and her step-father, whom he sees as more into the humanities. He works a lot in order to meet expectations and challenges at work, and he also enjoys the benefits that the company provides. Although he accepts that for the good circumstances he needs to work hard, Sándor and his wife have decided to slow down and spend more time with each other. He enjoys going to work where he sees the atmosphere familial and he is happy to take on more challenge and more tasks. Because of taking on more and the effort to prove that is good for the job, he often finds himself pressed for time. Beside the opportunities deriving from his step-father's work, Sándor himself also took several opportunities to gain experiences through internships and scholarships. In his case the driving force seems to be achieving and proving himself at work. To this end he is ready to sacrifice time and energy.

Case study: Z29, woman, married, full time translator, part-time English teacher and news editor

Zita was born in a small town, which has great traditions. In the town there is a relatively large group of intellectuals, which separates distinctly from other groups of the population – Zita's parents belong to the former group. Both his father and mother are teachers. They are patrons of the arts. Zita's mother leads an acting group, her father has a gallery and he himself makes artwork from leather. Her mother is from the Northern Hungarian highlands (now a part of Slovakia); Zita's father is a deacon. The family adheres to right wing political ideas.

Zita attended a primary school of music specialty. She took piano lessons, however, most of the time she played hooky and did not attend the classes. She sang in the choir and was a member in a folk dance group, with which they toured throughout Europe. She participated in many singing competitions. At the age of fourteen she had the opportunity to go to a fine arts high school but she did not take advantage of it. By the time she attended high school, she quit both folk dancing, as well as playing music.

Her average mark was B but in the third grade she failed at mathematics. Eventually she finishes high school and applied to law school but she did not get in. She starts attending the Japanese Public College but she quits after few months. In the end she graduates from a private college in the countryside majoring in communications. Already during the college years she began working at a radio station. Parallel to this she started working at the local TV where she stays to work after completing her traineeship. She worked here for six years. Then

she gets a job at a newly established regional, commercial radio station as an anchor-person and editor. She spends few years working here, and then she resigns and embarks upon job search for a few months. At the end of this period she starts working in three jobs: as a translator in the maintenance department of a cement factory, where she works from 6 am to 2 p.m.; as a news editor at a news agency in the capital, working here on Saturdays; as an English teacher at a local language school twice a week.

Her path begins as a classic story of a child of teacher parents (good student, good sports person). She attends private lessons; she goes to a specialised school. It seems, however, that she cannot live up to expectations: she quits everything halfway. Most probably her parents strove very hard to turn their daughter into a child prodigy. An alternative hypothesis could be that there are hidden conflicts within the family, maybe between the parents, which create such burden on her, that it becomes difficult for her to perform good results. Going to study in Finland would have been a perfect occasion to triumph and get away from home, but her declining to go seems to be the first milestone in shattering her parents' dreams, which might be some sort of revenge on them. (Zita giving up piano lessons and singing in the choir are only the first signs). Then comes failing at maths in high school – this must have been a real slap in the face for the parents who are esteemed citizens of the town. After this classic teachers' kid life-course dissipates for good – she is not admitted to law school. Studying at the Japanese school, which is outside the school system, appears as outright rebel even if it is not long term, as it ends within few months.

After that she enrolls in a college that has no prestige at all as it accepts anyone who applies. She chooses a major which began around then and was considered a novelty but what has become one of the most popular since then.

She seems to have found herself in working in the radio and TV. She gets married – it seems as if she succeeded at escaping the repression and conflicts coming from the parents. The series of success, however, ended a year ago and she is doing three kinds of jobs at the moment. As if she herself had no idea what she would like to do and as if finding her place had been an illusion. It seems that the parents pushed hard their dreams onto their daughter who cannot find her own dreams. She went as far as to rebel – unconsciously – against her parents but she did not go any farther – maybe precisely because she has never allowed herself to realise that in order to find her own path she needed to go against her parents' will. She tried hard to fulfil their inadequate expectations, probably out of the fear of losing their love if she hadn't, and in this process she lost her ability to find her own identity and path.

In the narrative she depicts herself as a tomboy, whose behaviour is bad but who has good abilities. However, she does not do anything beside what interests her (languages). Despite being a girl, her pranks are extreme: once a kid in the neighbourhood cuts her finger off (in reality this is a simple and an utterly innocent accident but she describes it differently).

What stands out in the narrative at once is that she talks lengthily (the interview is close to 40 pages) but says very little: her biography is only half a page. While from her biography she appears as an average girl (she did not have outstanding achievements at anything) who awkwardly rebels against her parents, she describes herself as a very cool and naughty girl and teenager, then as a non-conformist adult. However, if we look at all the recounted stories of her misbehaviour, we find that only few minor pranks were committed (smoking behind the school building). There is nothing that would go beyond the average. Yet, it is extremely important for Zita to appear extraordinary and terribly cool.

Why does she need this self-justification? Perhaps primarily because it would be a failure to admit that her life is a feeble attempt to go against her parents, while on the other hand a real test can be avoided by talking of „being a rebel”. This is the story of her parents as well: Zita’s father considers himself an artist, whereas he seems to be a „hobby-artist” who makes money from teaching geography. He never attends the exhibits to which he is invited – this seems to be related to avoiding being tried. What illustrates it most is the justification why Zita did not go to the college of fine arts: he concludes that it is impossible to get into that college without pulling strings and her style would have been destroyed there anyhow, and it is possible to practice art without going to the college. However, it seems that it is NOT possible, Zita’s father did not manage either, which again something, that Zita does not dare to realise; he is mostly at home among his pets isolated.

On top of that there is a marriage, which Zita herself does not interpret or maybe she cannot. Does it mean that there are serious conflicts within her? Or is it that Zita is not happy within?

In sum, Zita appears terribly infantile who has not been able to get out of the shadow of her parents to this day, which might be the cause of the difficulties of the marriage, too.

Zita has always tried to get a job, in which she would be able to realise herself. Even at a young age she worked as a DJ in a radio and as an editor at a TV channel. Her qualifications were adequate for these jobs but because of personal conflicts she left them. Thanks to her language skills and experience in the radio, she was able to find another job, even if it allows dj-ing part-time only. She is a full time translator but she enjoys that as well. She works among men but no conflicts arise as a result of this. The company where she is working now is undergoing major restructuring: older people are retiring and mostly young people are hired but she does not mention generational conflicts.

Is it possible that because of her own difficulties she has no empathy for the older colleagues, for whom it might be difficult to leave into the insecurity of the job-market of today? Is it possible, that these permanent changes in work are a sign of drifting, originating from her difficulties in her family?

Case study: R31 woman, 2 children, financial administrator

The life-story of the 31-year-old Rita is fundamentally different from all the other interviews made for our research. It is the story of a “self-made woman”, a type which one would think does not exist any longer these days.

Rita was born in 1976 as the second child of a skilled worker couple. Her mother was trained as a glove-maker, his father a mechanic. Beside her full-time job, Rita’s mother made dresses at home and Rita started off in this direction as well: she started vocational training of dress-making. The same year that Rita began school, her grandmother died after being bed-ridden for years and the family looking after her.

Rita left vocational training school after two years and started working in a shop as a shop assistant. At the age of 15, Rita meets a boy introduced to her by her mother. Shortly after this, the boy leaves the workers’ hostel where he had lived to move into their 3-room flat of Rita’s family in a housing development. Rita marries the boy at the age of 16 and two years later she gives birth to a child. Meanwhile she frequently changes her jobs, then finally she and her husband end up supervising a unit in a shop; for this her husband gave up his job as a turner at the Budapest Transport Company. In the shops where she worked, Rita was not a

registered employee and resorted to carrying out undeclared work. When she became pregnant, however, by threatening her employer to go to the court, she forced her employer to register her in order to ensure social security benefit for her maternity leave. During maternity leave, she does outworking and makes dresses at home, as well as taking on telemarketing work at home. Her husband returns to work at the Transport Company. Five years later their second child is born. During this maternity leave, Rita learns how to drive and starts a correspondence course at an economics high school. Right now, she has one more year to go until the completion of the training. In the meantime, Rita and her husband got a flat from the local government. For the past two years, Rita has worked in the social institution, Kőbánya, a disadvantaged district in Budapest. At the beginning she was employed as a secretary, by now she was appointed a financial manager.

A few years ago, she was one of the people to establish the local branch of the Association of the Left-wing Youth, then the public utility organisation “For Kőbánya”. She and her husband serve on the board of these organisations. They organise events.

Rita’s story is surprising. At the points in the interview when it turns out that Rita leaves school at the age of 16 and gives birth to a child at the age of 18, we may have thought that her career was over: if she ever starts working again, we may have thought, she will not be able to get a job other than as an unskilled worker. Her parents do not seem to have objected their daughter’s decision to drop out of school and they did not find another school for her either, despite the fact that both of them completed vocational training and are skilled workers. Is it because they feel that their studying was not worth it? Or that the world is different now where studying is not valuable? Or is it that they did not pay attention to their daughter, as they were busy with something else?

The latter is not likely; her family cannot be an indifferent one, given that they had cared for the grandmother for many years. Besides, by the time Rita leaves school, the grandmother had passed away, so the parents’ time cannot be taken up by caring for her. The fact that they let their 15-16-year-old daughter live together with a boy is also unusual. Rita does not move out of the family home but the boyfriend moves in instead. The parents’ marriage stands stable. On top of that, Rita got acquainted with the boy through her mother. We get the impression as if the parents were not objecting to Rita’s, presumably, rash decisions but stand beside her and support her – they accept her with her growing new family. It seems as if this was strengthening Rita: at work she starts fighting for her rights, then she starts studying again while raising a child and working for a livelihood. Moreover, later on she turns into an activist as well.

Could it be possible that a traditional skilled worker ethos was preserved in Rita’s family, which provides such a source of integrity for her? Is the family a remnant of the community of social-democratic workers? After all, Rita is organising a left-wing movement and fights for her rights...

Her story supports this theory. In her main narrative, she does not talk about her mother or her family – she talks about herself as if she were a completely independent and a totally self-reliant person who makes all her decisions on her own. At the same time, when we started posing questions, it turned out that she considered both her mother and her husband as real supporters – as if she was conveying the message that although she is independent but support is needed for this independence which she receives from these two people.

Her mother appears in her story in relation to the choice of partner:

In this my mother had a very large role ((laughing)). Although they say that this is not how it happens, but it was so. Er, I went to a vocational training school, my mother worked for the Budapest Transport Company, just like my husband, and then his life was only about body-building. Well, he took different kinds of powders and drugs, and I don't know what, he spent his salary on them as well. And once I went to my mother's workplace to have her sign my school record book after school, and then my mother said she wanted to introduce me to someone. And then me, as a 15-year-old little girl, then I was totally awe-stricken at the looks of this boy. Then we got acquainted, and then my husband contacted me through my mother, saying that he, well I wasn't a skeleton even back then, because then I weighed around 72 kilos, that he will help me lose weight. And he will help me put together a training schedule and everything, and then came the cinema too, and all that went with it. So the point is that he came to me, then we talked, and in the end he really took me to the gym, and I managed very well to go down to 65 kilograms and, er, so we started going out."

It seems as if Rita perceived that this way her mother helped her not only to lose weight – which in itself is a huge thing in the life of an adolescent girl – but also to form a secure relationship. She did that in the following way:

Well, my mother would do that=that my current husband came up to our flat, Jani came to see me and then she took my father out for a walk and left me alone with Jani. Something that many parents don't do, or wouldn't even do for their kid, so in this regard my mother is really cool ((laughing)). And finally we started going out and what I can say is that he moved into our flat maybe 3 months later my future husband, I managed to make it push it through ((laughing)).

On the other hand, the husband immediately appears in the role of a supporter as well, as he was the one who knew how an adolescent girl could lose weight.

The mother emerges in the role of an aid in relation to the flat as well:

Mom was very nice with this too, because my parents also live in a 3-room flat and of the 3 rooms one belonged to me. Then my husband moved in, after that my older daughter was born. Then it was the three of us in the small room, then when in 2000 I became pregnant with Zsuzsi, my younger daughter, then we wanted to move out and rent a flat, as the space was small for us, but mom didn't let us, she said that we should have another small room. And then there was a separate room for my daughters, one room, we had a separate room and the bigger room belonged to my parents. In the end, this way, this way I said that it is possible to work it out like this and finally, let's see, we managed to win a tender at the local government and we got a, er, 3-room flat which is in the property of the local government, where we currently live. Well, it's different. Although we very often visit my parents, and my parents help a lot, the girls have lunch there almost ever day, so mom helps a lot, but=but we still have our separate sphere. Which is a very good-.

It sounds as if it were very difficult for Rita to express that it is basically better now to live separately, grateful though she is for the help that her mother provided. Only after this did the point come where she explained why she was angry with her mother:

(Interviewer) And you mentioned that from one day to the next you left school...

(Rita) Yes, one day I still went, I think I was very upset after school one day, some injustice was done to me, and then I told my mother that I will never go again to that school. And, er, in this respect, well, I don't know if it's cool or not, or if she should have said that very well, my daughter, we will have to find another school then, because with my present thinking, if my daughter were in this situation, I would surely say that fine, but then find another school that you will finish, so there has to be something. While my mother was, I was a rather stubborn and obstinate little girl then as well, and she knew it. And she said she would go to work, she needs to earn money, she doesn't have time for such things, such people.

It looks as if Rita was cross with her mother because she did not act the way Rita would today; because her work, earning money seemed more important for the mother than her daughter's advancement. Or maybe with the sentence “*she would go to work, she needs to earn money*” the mother thought well, if not, then not, the daughter needs to find work? In the following sentence she overtly says this:

And, er, the following day I went to the school and told my teachers that I will leave school. Er, there was some urging that well=but what will happen to me, but I told them they should leave it up to me, I will work that out ((laughing)). So in the end this is=this is how my little life turned out – And when I went home, my mother told me that if you start working, then from your first salary you will pay for the food and the running expenses. I told her it was fine.

Then after a short break she start excusing her mother – she would like to restore the picture that she had previously painted of her, which depicts her as a caring mother:

Well, in fact, my parents weren't in a very good financial situation because my grandmother she died in 1990 but she had been ailing before that as well. And, er, well her medication cost a lot, and the doctor too, she couldn't leave the flat, so the doctor came to her, and the nurse too, and – So she needed to be carried and all, she had diabetes as well, so she had to take insulin. My mother gave her the insulin, then it had to be done with a syringe, ..., my mother injected the insulin twice a day. So=so the situation was rather difficult and, er, I guess my mother had enough problems of her own to deal with my silly things too, so she was under a lot of pressure those days. So in the end I went to work and started to support myself. I realised myself that I would be better off if I went to school, not to let employers take advantage of me.

Rita thinks that there is caring in the lack of her mother's caring: through this she learned how to support herself, how to protect herself from the outside world.

We see the same with regard to her husband: Rita sees him as a supporter as well and she makes him seem that way as well. Not only through how he stepped into her life, with helping her lose weight, but through the joint work while she was pregnant:

Well, it was very good for me to work with my husband because I had a regal life beside him. I can tell you that. He did many things if maybe I was tired, or if I felt squeamish, then he did things instead of me too, so it was very good for me. Especially when I was pregnant and I said that there will be some huge problem, there is some snag, then there was that, I felt peckish, or I was more irritable. That is a completely altered state, when someone is pregnant, there were times when he said why don't you go take a walk, go here or there, drop in here or there an then he did it on his own. (2) So, it was good.

Later on we learn that this caring is occasionally too much for Rita:

He is very proud of me ((laughing)). He is very proud of me; he usually says on these occasions that, er, I am right because I made the right decisions. My husband is such a person that when I was at home, then he built this kind of bastion around me, that he protected me from the outside world, so that nobody hurts me. So he didn't really want me to go to work. That I should stay home on my backside, I'm good enough at home. And when, er, got the driving licence, then that was a good decision, when I went to school, that was also a good decision, when I came here to work was also a good decision. So in the end=in the end, these weren't very bad decisions. So he says that he is proud of me and he would like me to finish a college too. He has supported me to the fullest possible extent up to now and he will continue to do that. (3)

And although his caring is sometimes too much but for this, Rita seems to be compensated by the fact that he is proud of her, as well as by the fact that they cooperate both in the work and in community life too.

2.2 Type 2: Work as an obligation

It is not worth living without doing something

Work is not a source of joy but is also something more than a mere income-generating activity – it is a meaningful activity one has to do to get by but no more is expected from it. There are no real ambitions to advance in the career but work is performed conscientiously. Work has to be appreciated. Standardised life-course and pragmatic relation to work are characteristic.

Our interviewees working in agriculture also belong to this type. Work for them often means something that they were “born into”, something they inherited from their parents. They normally have a standardised life course.

Je30, man, manager at dairy farm

Jenő works as a manager at a dairy farm in a small town close to Budapest after completing an agriculture high school and university. His father worked in agriculture, as well as Jenő's older brother. Jenő is responsible for managing the farm but he is involved in every phase of the work – a typical career for highly educated people in agriculture. He works 70-80 hours a week on average but at least two weekends a month he performs on-call duties as well. He and his wife and two children live in a flat, provided for them by the owner of the farm, which is located in the middle of the farm. His life is not separated well from work, in fact, it seems as if the domain of work equalled his life and vice versa (symbolised by the location of their flat). The ethos of hard work seems to be often referred to.

J58, man, agricultural entrepreneur

János is an agricultural entrepreneur. Together with his son and his daughter-in-law, they farm animals in the vicinity of Budapest. János' parents live off the land as well; they were not members of the local agricultural co-operative under socialism, which often caused difficulties both in the life of János and for the family. János went to an agricultural high school and after that he graduated from a college of agriculture in Budapest. Upon completing the college, he went back to his home village and began working in the local co-operative. When it was possible, he set up his own farm and since then he has worked as an entrepreneur. He participates in all the phases and types of the work on the lands.

A28, woman, skilled worker in pharmaceutical company

After an unsuccessful attempt of completing a secondary high school of health specialty, Adrienn finished a vocational secondary school and became a china decorator, just as her mother. She worked at the local china factory but with the factory's financial difficulties and the danger of being laid off, she found a job at a nearby restaurant and she also completed her baccalaureate. Following graduation, she moved to the capital and began working as an unskilled worker at a pharmaceutical company. At the beginning she lived in a workers' hostel but later on she and a couple of her colleagues started renting a flat. She completed a course organised by the company and now she works as a skilled worker in 4 shifts, often doing overtime.

L58, man, product development engineer

László's father was a carpenter and his mother stayed home to take care of the household. After graduating from high school in 1967 in a Northeastern Hungarian city, he applied to an agriculture university but was not accepted and he began studies at a technical college in the capital instead. After graduation and a short period of working in a factory in Budapest, he returned home and was offered a job at the china factory there. He has worked there since 1974 in an upper level position and now he has only 2-3 years until retirement, which he is looking forward to.

Case study: M38, woman, overseer in factory

Maria was born in 1969 in a small town in Eastern Hungary. She comes from a worker's family: her father was an electrician, her mother worked at the chocolate factory of the town, then as a cleaner and then as a chef in one of the local schools. Maria has two sisters who are

8 and 11 years younger. The younger one moved to England five years ago and is married to an Algerian man, while the other one lives in the same town as Maria, with her family.

After elementary school, Maria goes to a high school of confectionary production in Budapest. At the end of the first school year she fails at mathematics. She moves back to her hometown and begins a vocational school in the same field. When she is 15, she starts going out with a boy she meets at the vocational school. She starts working at the chocolate factory first as an apprentice during the summer of her school years, then she is hired to work there in a blue-collar job.

At the age of 21 she is still going out with the first boyfriend. She becomes pregnant and they get married. Their son is born. The same time they start building a house in a small place right outside their hometown. Their daughter is born four years after their son. Few years ago she was appointed secretary to the overseers at the factory and has been working as such since then. She works in four shifts. She is also a trade union representative.

Maria's husband was trained as a waiter. He worked in many places (nuclear plant in Central Hungary, cultural centre in his hometown, now he works as a truck driver for a company and delivers meat to shops). Maria and her husband completed an evening course at the local high school and graduated few years ago. Maria applied to a college of social pedagogy four years ago but did not get in.

From the biography we understand that Maria was an only child for many years, it is not until she is 8 that her first sister is born. She probably gets all the attention from the family until then and much less after the small ones are born. It is probable that her parents need to work more now that there are three children, leaving less attention for Maria and more responsibilities for her too.

Maria starts a high school in the capital, Budapest, about 200 kilometres from her hometown, maybe in an attempt to get away from the family, as she feels herself superfluous at home or do something 'extraordinary' which would draw the attention of the parents to herself. Or were the parents, who wanted her go? Who thought, it would be easier for her to get a higher education in the capital, or escape the problems at home? However, this attempt proves to be too hard for a small town girl of 14 of blue-collar worker parents and she is not able to keep things under control: she fails at the end of the school year. But she may have been successful at drawing attention to herself and her parents would not let her go back to the capital but make her stay where they can see what she is doing and can discipline her and supervise her studying as well.

Work seems to be a compensation for the failure in studies. She starts working immediately after finishing vocational school. She becomes pregnant after going out with her boyfriend for six years. This settles them in their hometown: marriage, building a house; another child.

She has worked at the chocolate factory all her life; few years ago she was promoted from her blue-collar job to the position of secretary to the overseers (office job). She is also a trade union representative. On the one hand she probably takes pride in her work but this is not what she really wants to do, which is clearly shown by the fact that she applies to a college to study social-pedagogy: an occupation which is entirely different from what she does now but which would hardly bring in more money. Cannot she find herself in her current work? Would she like to get a more prestigious position? Does she have more intellectual interest?

In Maria's narrative the following themes seem to be recurring:

Security versus mobility: despite plans otherwise and despite one concrete possibility, they get stuck in their hometown. Maria seems to be more reluctant than her husband to give up security and plunge into the unknown. She talks appreciatively of her mother who after 20 years was bold enough to leave her job at the chocolate factory and start working as a cleaner at a local school; she talks of her youngest sister as very different because she was brave enough to change and move abroad to the different world of the UK and to marry a man of a completely different culture.

Security is related to **surveillance and order**: she would prefer to have a house in which she could see what her kids are doing (now they are mostly upstairs in their rooms with their doors closed); she blames her failing at the Budapest school on that there was nobody who would have stood behind her and encouraged her to study. Peace and order seem to be important, which would be turned upside down with a change or with moving yet so longed for. The importance of order for her seems to lead to an extreme right wing political leaning, which though is not explicated in her narrative but is evident.

Secure and peaceful old times vs. a chaotic, dangerous present environment: nostalgia for the old times comes up in her case as well (she speaks fondly of the good community they had at the factory when she began working there; excursions with colleagues) versus an insecure, endangering world now.

Although she is not appointed to be an over-seer (middle-manager) because her qualifications are insufficient for that, she says she performs the same tasks as an overseer. Although she is regretful of not being recognised as an overseer, neither financially nor with the prestige, she takes pride in her position, which seems to be a compensation for her failures in studying, and performs her job conscientiously (e.g. she calls in, even after the shift ended, to check if everything is going OK). Yet, she is not fully in the position, as she is not appointed.

As she speaks of her children, we have the impression; she feels that they have problems, because she is unable to 'supervise' their studies or what they do. Though she doesn't say it overtly, she sounds like believing they have problems at school and with their behaviour.

Why is security the most important for her? Does she feel that she would have performed better at school, if there had been a more secure environment surrounding her? Does she look at her past now as if she would have been left alone? Is it possible, that she cannot avoid repeating their parents' pattern: they worked in the local factories, presumably in shifts, had extra jobs as well, and did not have much time for her when her younger sisters were born. Or at least this fear of her is present? Does she feel that she cannot provide the security to her children what they needed? Is it possible, that the wish to learn social pedagogy is in a way searching for some help? That those, working in that field, would know, what she needed, could give her advice and help?

2.3 Type 3: Work as a source of money

To be honest, I have never entered my workplace with the thought how nice it will be to spend my day here, I was never happy doing it. I just do it because I have to.

For interviewees in this category, relation to work is purely instrumental with work often seen as some nuisance one has to do in order to gain income. Their narrative is stagnating with no dynamics: in the case of those for whom work is not a source of joy and therefore talking about work is characterised by distantiating. Those who consider work solely an income-generating activity or an unavoidable nuisance, cannot tell their life stories in the context of work.

Within this type, two sub-types could be formed based on the role of non-work activities in the interviewees' life-

Zs26, woman, married, foreman at multinational company (Zs26)

Zsuzsa was born in Tatabánya, a town 60 kilometres from Budapest to the West. During socialism, her parents worked in the mine nearby, now they are working in its successor firms. The father is a locksmith, the mother is an administrator. Zsuzsa married early, right after finishing high school. She has worked at Nokia since 1999, since its subsidiary in Komárom (a nearby town) was opened. Her high-school class was specialised in languages, she speaks English and French well. In the high-school years she worked in a porcelain shop in the summers. While studying in the secondary school, she could not decide what to study further; she was sure only that she wanted to study in her hometown. At the local higher education institution, however, there was a tuition fee, which prevented her from attending the college. She studied informatics and business at a university in Székesfehérvár, a town nearby, but she quit before finishing. She liked studying economics and begins a correspondence course at another university's economy department in Sopron, near to the Austrian border. She has to spend a week there every month. Parallel to it she works at the service department of Auchan supermarket in Budapest. Her blood pressure is normally low, still, during work it rises so much that she sometimes faints. She gets a space-setting pill and another against anxiety. She decides to find a new job. It is her husband's idea that she should work at Nokia. She applies for a foreman's post and gets it and has been working there for three years now. Her hope was that in the new job she would gain the possibility to spend more time together with her husband than before, but because of the shift-work, her wish is not fulfilled. She commutes on the company's bus and travels 30 kms in both directions every day. As a technician, she works 12 hours per day for 3 days, then she has 3 free days, then 12 hours per night 3 times. She has to do a lot of overtime and a lot of training. As her English is good, (and also as she is also in a trade union position), she is often sent abroad, though it is unusual in her position. She applied for higher positions within the company many times, but she has never got them – she feels that the job postings are fake, as the bosses know in advance who will get the job. She would not dare to take up a job somewhere else than a multinational company; she has trust only in such companies. Her conflicts derive from the fact, that she has a higher qualification than her boss and also from the older colleagues' lack of computer skills and their unwillingness to ask for help. It was difficult to conduct the interview with her as she arranged little time for it, although at the end it seemed, she would have talked longer if she had had more time.

Z25, man, technician at multinational company

Zoltán was born in a small town in Hungary. His father is a small entrepreneur, his mother works as a saleswoman. After finishing high school, Zoltán specialised in electro-techniques, he studies in the same field in another region of the country. He does not finish his studies, as he fails an exam at the end of the first year and fails when he tries it again. He returns to his hometown, where he takes up a job at an SME, but his company goes bankrupt. He finds a job in his trade in a nearby town at a multinational company. He spends two years there, but after the company relocates the branch to Romania, he has to look for a new job again. He finds a job at the other end of the country at a multinational company in Komárom, central Hungary, where he works as a technician. He is satisfied with his work and salary. After work he goes to the gym. He has no friends, no girlfriend, he does not try to make friends at work either as there is a big fluctuation. He has been working there for three years, which is unusually long there. He rents a flat with two colleagues. He rarely visits his family and is not in touch with his old

friends. He works in shifts and finds it unbearable, as it messes up one's biological clock. He talks about going to university, but on the other he finds it superfluous.

T32, man, IT technician at private foundation

The interview was conducted at his place of work in a quiet room. He was happy about being interviewed. Tamás is a leading technician of the computer system of a privately funded foundation. Tamás is responsible for the operation of the organisation's e-mail system. He was born in the U.S., as his parents moved there in hope of a higher quality of life - as we understand it from his unclear story. As we understood, they move to Germany not being satisfied in the US and not much later they return to Hungary. By the time Tamás starts school, they are here again. What makes his story even more unclear and unbelievable is the way of story telling itself. He claims that his father works in the control tower of a military airport, which probably does not fit together with this immigration attempt. Tamás has no brothers or sisters. He considers the result of his family's moving around that his Hungarian was not good enough in his childhood and had to go to a special teacher to get rid of his impediment in speech. Together with some friends he has started to do programming during his secondary school years, which made clear for him what he would like to do later on. He attends the technical university in Budapest, where his life-style changes: he does not hang out with a lot of friends any more – he has only one friend and a girlfriend. After finishing university, he got a job at his present workplace and breaks up with his girlfriend. His hobby is aviation, he learns to drive planes – in order to counteract his work, he explains, though it seems to us as if he thought about everything he does in the same manner: military-like order and controllability are the most important for him. He likes discussing politics very much. With his girlfriend they plan to have a child. He belongs to the internet-community of information technologies, which he finds very important for himself, especially because of his work. The company for solving problems at the place of work reminds him of secondary school times. He does not seem to have any friends.

Iv52, man, bus driver

Iván completed vocational school in 1967 and immediately began working at the state-owned Budapest Public Transport Company as a mechanic. After completing compulsory military service, he found job as a driver and for several years he worked as a driver and in various other positions at other companies. Meanwhile, he completed several training courses and his 2 children were born in the second half of the 1980s. He went back to the Budapest Transport Company in 1992 and since then he has worked there as a bus driver. He is planning to go on early retirement and he is looking forward to stopping work.

2.3.1 Type 3a: Hobby as a source of fulfilment

Although the narrative reveals an upward dynamic, the narrative is not made dynamic by it; the narrator does not live in his/her story; it is only the hobby that he/she can talk about in a different way even if in fact the character of the hobby and work is the same;

Case study: Zs57, woman, 1 child, unemployed (mother of Z27 in the next subtype)

A particular interest of the case is that we were able to interview Zsuzsa and her 27-year-old son. (Analysis of the interview with her son is under Type 3.b.) Zsuzsa has medium level qualifications, while her son completed university. The mother was born in 1950 in a small town in the countryside; her father was a forester there, her mother a special education teacher for mentally handicapped children. The family's lodging provided by the father's company, were in a castle requisited by the communist regime. She and her three siblings were surrounded by many pets there and she had the chance to ride horses back at an early age when it was not widespread hobby. After completing primary school, she starts an agricultural secondary school in a nearby town, where she lives in a dormitory; after that she moves to another town and lives with relatives but after a year her parents move to this town as well. After finishing secondary school she has many short-term jobs. Then she begins working as an assistant in a veterinary laboratory in a small town and spends most of her time working at an abattoir. Her job was terminated two years ago, she has tried various things but she has

been unemployed since then. Her hobby has been dog breeding. She was married; her husband, who worked as a chemist, got a job at the same company where she worked as well. He died in 2005 ago after three years of illness. One of her three siblings is a vet; another one is a chemist, while the third is an agricultural engineer. Zsuzsa's son was born in 1980.

We do not find anything “outstanding” in Zsuzsa's biography except maybe that agriculture and tending animals seems to be accentuated in the life of the Zsuzsa and her siblings. It is also needs to be noted that personal attributes are hardly mentioned in the interview, except for the accounts of her childhood family as an idyllic phase and a nice memory and her siblings' children, contrary to her own son, maintain the family tradition which she identifies with the love of animals.

In relation to her own son she discloses only that she never had much time for him beside his work. Did she feel he was a burden to her? What she says about her husband is only that he went to work at the same place where she was, that he was severely ill for three years then died, and makes references to financial difficulties as a result of this. As if she did not have feelings for her husband and son.

On the other hand, she talks about her job with great enthusiasm. In her own interpretation the force in her is the family tradition, e.g. the love of animals, which is why it seems frightening that she comes to work in an abattoir, in a food industry laboratory, i.e. she works with carcasses of animals. She talks animatedly about the dogs she keeps and breeds at home in contrast to her son, who appears in her narrative as problematic (it was difficult that he had to be taken to the kindergarten and then he had to be picked up; even at this age he does not have a real job, etc.)

The analysis of the text suggests that Zsuzsa loves animals only and she can relax only with puppies. What she emphasises most from her memories of her childhood family is that they love animals, as if this was the only connection to them.

Zsuzsa's mother was a special education teacher. Whenever, in relation to her mother's job, she talks of the attachment of children and adults with disabilities, she conveys the sense that she considers them pets – maybe the „matter” with her son is that he „unfortunately” did not turn out to be like people with disabilities and thus pet-like.

A complete inability to handle – human – emotions is what characterises the narrative of both the mother and son. The mother, however, seems to have found the most appropriate place for it at work and seems as though she were gratifying a kind of sadism in analysing the carcasses of the „beloved” animals, which is then compensated by the prattling to the puppies kept at home, while her son and husband do not really matter. Is it possible that this played a role in the untimely death of her husband? Can it be that her son found this paralysing? Is this the reason why he cannot find his place either in work or in private life and why cannot gratify his own emotions?

2.3.2 Type 3b: Cannot “think out of the box”

Narrative is stagnating both when work life and personal life are recounted. Although the biography is characterised by progress, it does not occur in the narrative and there is also little progress in the narration itself. Interviewees in this type work diligently to amass assets for a later time. The narrator is actually “not present” in the narrative.

Case study: Zoltán, man, 27, factory worker, (Z27), Son of Zsuzsa in type 3.a

Zoltán was born in 1980. He went to an art high school. After finishing the high school he began college, majoring in art and cultural management. He finished his classes but was not able to complete his degree because of failing to acquire the compulsory language certificate. He has not had a job corresponding to his qualifications since he finished his courses. Currently he is working in a Nokia factory at the conveyor belt. He has not had a girlfriend.

What is striking in Zoltán's story is that he works by a conveyor belt as a factory worker despite his having completed university and his intellectual family background (his grandmother and grandfather had higher education degrees as well, his mother also worked in a position requiring higher qualifications). What may lie behind the boy's surprising career path? We would suppose that the grandparents, a forester and a special education teacher, raised their children, including their daughter, in peace and harmony in the castle in the countryside and the boy's parents did the same. But where does the path go off track then? And how is it told by the interviewees themselves?

Just as in the interview with his mother, in Zoltán's interview family-related and personal issues are not mentioned. Zoltán does not say anything about his family; he does not mention his parents at all in the interview.

It may be that the son did not receive enough attention from the mother and he ended up becoming a drifting figure who can not find his real self, who does not have real goals or values, and who, with his university degree, will work by the conveyor belt at a firm because that job seems to be the easiest to find.

The boy, according to his own narrative, does not want to teach art because he finds it impossible to discipline the students. Is it that he is scared of being „at ease”, which may be required to practice art? Is this the reason why he does not have real ambitions for drawing? Why does he consider getting a job in graphic design (he says he would like to find a job in that area) desirable: is it because in business there are boundaries and frameworks, the clients put in their orders for what they would like? Is this why he would rather teach history, as a history teacher is in a better position to discipline? Another issue arising in relation to this is that he does not seem to sense that history is not an „objective” science and if he studies it in Slovakia, then it is going to be different than studying it at home because of the traditional national conflicts of the two nations. Is it possible that he is so afraid of emotions that he averts them to an extent that he does not sense that history itself and teaching history is emotionally charged?

2.4 Conclusion from individual interviews

As we discussed in more detail in the course of individual interview analysis, we have found 3 main types of approach to work. These were based on the role of work in their lives: in the first case it has got an important role, forming the identity of the individual, whereas in the other two it was not so. Still, those interviewees listed under type 2 were able to enjoy their work, whereas the last group consisted of those, for whom work had nothing to do with either identity or pleasure – it was just a means to earn money and ensure an existence.

One might say that this is a result we could have seen in advance, which is, of course, true in a sense. Still, the individual interviews have shown – and this gives a special role to narrative

interviewing among the techniques of sociology – how people differ within the types because of their differing background and psychic structure.

What played the most important point of the background differences in our case was age – not age in a biological sense but as something that causes the differences in social experiences, which defines one's space in history.

The oldest people in our sample – as in Hungary retirement age is now 62 – could be over sixty. They are just a little bit too young to have experienced WWII. However, even those who are a bit younger have already experienced communism, though just the oldest ones are old enough to have lived through its wildest period, the regime of Mátyás Rákosi, Prime Minister of Hungary between 1952 and 1953. This is why the problems of this period are not decisively present in our interviews.

But the latest period of communism and the era of János Kádár (1956–1988), from the 1960s onwards, the time when Hungary was called the “the happiest barrack in the Communist camp”, was still not so happy. People could get into trouble for irrationally tiny “sins”, which of course affected not only their personal lives, but their carriers also. Most people, however, were able to live without problems in peace if they respected the compromise offered by the regime. – Age, and through this the historical context and the various phases of socialism, is the first factor that makes life-stories very different.

After some decades another big change came: the transition, the shift from communism to capitalism, which on the one hand changed the economic system, but also brought radical changes in other spheres as well, creating for example the possibility for the individual to make decisions for himself/herself and the possibilities of communities, changing the culture of the country, its openness, etc. One had to cope first of all with the new economic situation and secondly with the changes in the relationship between people brought about by all the other factors. – This is the second factor that caused the differences among the stories we heard.

Other factors that have important roles are probably mainly psychological ones: what one has brought from his/her background; how he/she grew up in the family; how much love, care, independence etc. he/she has got; what sort of standards and patterns he/she has seen with regard to relation to work – these all have influence on one's own relation to work. Probably the differences of our three main types are mainly caused by these last differences of the surrounding, though communism allowed people, who were not in conflict with the regime, to feel that society or the government was obliged to give them anything they needed. However, the emergence of type 1 in our typology proves that even this effect was not strong enough to prevent some people from building their identity partly upon their work.

So our types are at first differentiated according to this last “relational” factor.

The influence of the historical differences comes forward in the sub-types. However, this differentiation seemed to be important in the first type only, as the relation to work for the other two types was not so decisive that the effects of politics would have caused important changes in their lives through it. As we arrive to the third type, there we see such an emptiness, which cannot be influenced by any direct political change. We can assume, however, although without being able to prove it, that the societal changes of the last ten

years, together with the changes on the labour market, have resulted in many young people belonging to the group for which work has never given any sort of fulfilment.

3. Group interviews in our context

3.1 *The interview technique*

3.1.1 **Compromise between group interviews and focus groups**

As the interviews we analysed prior to the preparations for the group interviews proved our hypotheses on psychic factors being just as important as the social situation in one's relation to work, we decided not to conduct simply a group interview, where the conscious factors and the views play the greatest role, but we have decided on a compromise. We have combined the projective approach with the cognitive one and used a script in which both were present. As the projective methods usually use game-like situations, it could also serve as an introduction for more serious discussion later on in the course of the group discussion.

3.1.2 **Main themes and questions**

As our research focuses on the generational approaches to work and their differences, this was one of the themes that our interviews concentrated on. However, our preliminary impression was that in Hungarian society there is a great gender difference, which we cannot dismiss when trying to understand generational differences with regard to relation to work. Gender differences are particularly important because studies underline that in Hungarian society a patriarchal attitude still prevails which holds that men should be primarily the providers and the breadwinners in the family, while women's real calling is at home and not at work. This is so despite that in order to realise the socialist goal of industrialisation, a wide network of kindergartens, nurseries and after-school facilities were established from the 1950s on to enable women with children participate in the labour market, while on the other hand the financial situation of the majority of families, under socialism and more so nowadays, necessitated that women work as well. Therefore equality between men and women in this sense was realised under socialism, and the goals of Western feminist movements, and basically the feminist movement itself as well, are basically unknown in Hungary. The emancipation of women does not seem to go much beyond claims that men should also participate in housework or childcare, although in many cases even this may not be sought as a result of strong traditions, or because controlling the household can also mean some kind of power.

Therefore in the course of group interviews, besides exploring the attitude of young/older men and young/older women, we strived to explore the image that society has about these groups as well.

3.1.3 **Group constellation**

According to our hypotheses not only gender and age, but differences in education also generate differences in the relation to work, therefore we agreed to have three groups differing with regard to educational level. Also, it seemed to have the advantage that through this we

could avoid the difficulties that big educational differences could cause in communication within the groups. We defined the different educational levels differently in the different age groups, as the average level of education differs enormously:

Table 4: The distribution of the population by education level and age

Age groups	Educational level			
	Below 8 classes of primary school	Primary school	Secondary	High
12-14	0,8			
15-19	0,6	93,7	37,6	
20-24	0,4	97,9	50,9	
25-29	0,5	97,9	45	14,8
30-34	0,5	97,8	44,9	15,3
35-39	0,6	97,5	44,6	16,1
40-44	0,7	97	42,2	14,9
45-49	0,6	97,4	42,5	14,4
50-54	0,6	96,7	44,5	14,3
55-59	0,8	93,7	38,4	13,9
60-64	1	86,7	29,3	9,5
65-69	1	73,7	22,8	8,5
70-74	0,8	60,8	19,9	7,5
75-X	1,2	40,5	14,3	5,1
Total	0,7	88,8	38,2	12,6

Source: Population census, Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2000
<http://www.nepinfo.hu>

Our aim was to organise three groups including people with more or less the same educational level from the capital, Budapest. The age groups were the same as in the case of narrative interviews: people below 30, people of 30-50, and people over 50. We attempted to compose mixed groups with regard to age, striving to have an even distribution of participants by age and gender. However, this was not always successful, e.g. in Hungary women are much more willing to take part in activities like opinion polls. The discussions were audio- and video-recorded. There were two moderators at each group discussion.

The composition of the groups was the following:

Table 5: Group1 - low educational level

Age groups	Sex		Children	
	Men	Women	With children	Without children
Below 30	2	1	0	3
30 – 50	2	3	3	2
Over 50	0	1	1	0
Total	4	5	4	5

Occupations: house-painter, care-taker in social care home, storeman in hypermarket, confectioner, worker in knitting factory, cleaner, stock-keeper, kitchen worker and also a temp.

Table 6: Group 2. – Mid-level education

Age groups	Sex		Children	
	Men	Women	With children	Without children
Below 30	0	1	0	1
30 – 50	2	3	2	0
Over 50	1	2	3	0
Total	3	6	5	1

Occupations: nail builder, accountant, IT person, realtor, waitress, administrator, call centre operator, customer service operator, pensioner who also works

Table 7: Group 3 – higher education

Age groups	Sex		Children	
	Men	Women	With children	Without children
Below 30	1	3	1	3
30 – 50	2	1	1	0
Over 50	1	1	1	1
Total	4	5	5	1

Occupations: teacher, customer service operator, pensioner who works, catering, graphic designer, wine-maker

3.2 Group interview results

3.2.1 Exercise 1: ‘imagined worlds’

In the first exercise we requested participants to describe the world they would like to live in and also specify what they would like to be in this world. This was in order to explore values participants held with regard to their lives and work, as well as to inquire about their current situation through the contrasts they made.

What was common in all groups was a strong desire for “calmness” and “stability” in life, in contrast to what characterises life now. Through the ideal worlds projected by all the groups, the image of a disconcertingly unstable and insecure real world unfolds, where everyone needs to drudge and run in order to make ends meet, which causes a lot of stress. Lottery jackpot was mentioned in all groups in several cases as a solution to problems. In all groups older participants made reference to a more levelled society, where differences between people were not so big as now and allocation of resources were more equal, which is a reference to the previous regime and reveals nostalgia towards that society. Another idea overarching all groups was that an end to this crazy life, a catharsis and cleansing, cannot come by itself but only a catastrophe or at least some radical break with the current way of life was necessary.

Work, or working, was not dominant in the worlds imagined by groups 1, the group with a low level of education group and 2, the group in the middle, but received more emphasis in group 3, which consisted of people with higher education degree.

a) *Group 1: low level of education*

In group 1, one young woman specified a profession (doctor-researcher) which she would like to be in an ideal world, while the others did not mention work as part of a more “harmonious”, “peaceful” and “calm” life they imagined. It seems that for the majority of this group, an ideal world does not include work or working interpreted in a broader sense. Most of the imagined worlds that the participants described seemed to make a sharp contrast to real life, except for one woman who thought anything could be realised in the current world but even she would not mind a lottery jackpot:

To tell you the truth, I wouldn't like to live in such an imagined world, I think one can realise whatever he/she wants in this world just as well, I don't think I need an imagined world. Of course, a lottery jackpot would not hurt in this world or in an imagined one, but I don't want anything else apart from it.
(Roxi, woman, 38)

There was a lively debate sparked by the topic of equal allocation of resources versus performance-based evaluation, i.e. previous regime and current one. There was also consensus about some major catastrophe awaiting the Earth as a result of the vices in the world, where the destruction of billions of people could be expected. The apocalyptic images indicate that group members are anxious about the direction the world is going to and also about the accumulation of evil in the world and in people.

b) *Group 2: medium level of education*

In group 2, one third of the participants mentioned some kind of occupation, or at least some kind of activity/responsibility, which they would like to perform in an ideal world. The place of work in an ideal life was explicated in the following way by a female participant:

Everyone works so much that he/she has time for what is really worth living for. So it may be good that he/she finds joy in work but there has to be some plus, which one needs and has time for. (Judith, woman, 45)

Another middle-aged female participant specified ‘helping others’ as an activity that she would do in the imagined world if she had a lot of money. In this group too, the image of a harsh world can be discerned through the imagined worlds, and moving out of this world was mentioned, often in the antagonism of city and nature/village: moving to a forest, to an island with loved ones was an image that recurred in group 3 as well.

I would like to live on an island. Not an uninhabited one but on a civilised one, and mainly with people with whom I like spending time with, or whom I love, so my loved ones should be there too. And, anything, building a ship, or anything. There one is able to look after himself/herself and there is no stress and the sun is shining and everything is all right. (Anett, woman, 25)

c) **Group 3: high level of education**

In group 3, work received more emphasis in the projected worlds, mostly in the form of setting up own enterprises: four out of nine participants’ dream of launching their own businesses. In two cases, running an own enterprise was contrasted with the experience of defencelessness and vulnerability at work, which they have experienced at work in real life. This seems to be possible only through winning the lottery jackpot again:

What I imagine for myself – if I won on the lottery, for example – is buying a farm in the countryside. My family,, my siblings and their children would be there too and we would run a rural tourism business...because I would like to break out of this world a little but. So I wouldn’t like to depend on anyone else, only on myself. So if I work, then it should have a result but if I don’t work, then that’s my problem. And maybe moving out of this world is not the best solution but at the moment I don’t see any alternative... (Klári, woman, 53)

Apart from defencelessness, the lack of appreciation of the work done was also voiced. It sounds as if work was not only a source of stress but was insufficiently rewarded to secure a living:

I would like a world where we don’t need to expect a better situation from winning on the lottery but ... from decent work and from what we receive as a result of that.. (Gábor, man, 42)

Instead of summarising, we would like to point out again the most striking element of this exercise, i.e. the role of work in the imagined worlds. The role of work was smaller and smaller as we look at the groups from the most educated one to the least educated groups. In the case of group 1, of low educational level, work seemed to be a nuisance in their lives, nothing else, and if they had the possibility to choose, they would get rid of it.

3.2.2 Exercise 2: montage

In the course of this exercise we asked participants to prepare montage pictures about the following groups:

- young female employees;
- young male employees;
- older female employees;
- older male employees.

In each group-interview participants were divided into two groups, each preparing two montages by placing various pictures on a sheet of paper. For this, a range of pictures was provided depicting everyday objects, as well as pictures depicting scenes from the world of work. Besides specifying the age group and the sex of the groups to be portrayed, no other instruction or point of view was given. After the pictures were completed, each group was asked to present them and the other groups were asked to comment. The groups were asked to give a title to the montage they prepared.

Before presenting the results in detail, it is important to note that participants had strong and differing opinions about the group of employees in question. There was general consensus in the groups when creating the stereotypical image of employees of certain characteristics.

a) *The image of young female employees – From family-centeredness to careerism*

As the educational level of the groups increased, the image of a ‘careerist woman’ became more discernable. While the group with low educational level saw ambitious working young women as striving for self-realisation and endangered by their life-style in living long enough to be pensioners, the group consisting of people with mid-level educational background saw women pursuing a career in a negative light: they were seen as “careerists” neglecting other things in life.

Level of education	Title given to the picture	What characterises this life-style?	Adjectives used
Low	“Young female worker”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Educated – Married – 2 children – Money – Family-centeredness – Extreme hobby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Youthful – Dynamic – Hyperactive
Middle	“Single careerist”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Light – Depressing – What is attractive in it: money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Speeding up – Burning out – Family and relaxation are not values – Drudging – It is not calmness that she is desiring – She uses her femininity in a manipulative way – Beautiful and smart, she can get on well in life

Group 1: low educational level

The group titled the montage ‘neutrally’, “Job entrant woman”, which does not carry any value judgement, contrary to titles given by other groups. Based on the association phase of the exercise, it can be said that group 1 perceived young woman employees as living their lives based on conservative values. She is married and has children, and she is family-centred. She is educated; while at school, she did not go out but focused on her studies. After completing school, she chose the right man to marry. Her life consists of constant balancing between family and work; time will tell how successful she is in doing both.

She gets higher and higher in the hierarchy, if she manages, in the meantime she is raising her children, she is trying to hold her relationship together, so that it isn't detrimental to her job (...), everything is in the making. (Csilla, woman, 29)

During the discussion of the montage, the image of a self-realising woman comes into the foreground, who plans all areas of her life. In order to realise this, she has to be an egoist, the group concluded, and oppresses her husband. Her job, typically, is also connected to planning or designing as well. Some group members opposed this view and concentrated on the positive aspect of this perceived life-style: the ability for self-realisation and the ability to live, as she would like to, as well as the steadfastness and insistence with regard to her dreams and ideas.

I rather see independence, so not an egoist, (...) but an independent person who creates builds up around her what's important. (Marcsi, woman, 51)

Group 2: mid-level education

In the case of the group of mid-level educational background, members characterised the montage depicting the young female employee as “crowded” and “depressing”. There was one participant only, a young woman, whose opinion differed: she described it as “jaunty”. The following elements were perceived as belonging to the life-style of a young female employee and were seen as attractive: a lot of money, cool job, holidays, car. During the discussion the group concluded that young female employees are single, therefore they hold a different value system than those who have family, and especially those in the group who have family themselves, who voiced in this opinion.

She has different values than someone who has family. Completely different, speed, speeding up is what her world is about.

Extreme views were also voiced:

Anett (woman, 25): Fundamental values [are missing from her world], I think. It varies what are thought of as fundamental values, family, ... relaxation. [There are people for whom] a job is more important than relaxation, for example.

Attila (man, 35): She does not want relaxation.

Kriszta (woman, 38): I don't think she does, either.

Norbi (man, 31): Drudging.

The group holds that on the long run nothing justifies this life-style, as someone who lives like the depicted woman burns out very soon. Group members distanced themselves from the young woman characterised as a single, aggressively ambitious woman. Interestingly enough, just as in the case of the low-level education group, it was men who pointed out positive elements as well with regard to young female employees: they emphasised the positive aspect of championing something – in this case the avowal of femininity, as illustrated by the opinion of one male group member: “*she clearly represents her womanliness*”.

In the course of the discussion, the initially negative opinion grew increasingly ambiguous:

Attila (man, 35): She markedly shows to her environment that she is a woman, so she is all glitter and gloss, so practically she is operating with her femininity, so this is what's dominant.

Anett (woman, 25): She is a universal woman.

Attila (man, 35): Exactly.

Anett (woman, 25): Yes. She is beautiful, smart, she has a good job, she can get on well in this world.

The world of a single young female professional becomes attractive and repulsive at the same time. Avowing femininity turns into an instrument, while on the other hand climbing is toned down to avowal. Maybe this ambivalence is similar to that of group 1: this life-style is attractive but values are seen irreconcilable and are unattainable, so there is no solution but to get rid of an unattainable goal through rejecting it. Toning down strong and extreme views, on the other hand, may be a result of that group members together are able to include rejected values, they begin to rely on their desire for a rejected life-style but which is let go of after leaving the room.

Group 3: high level of education

Interestingly, the group with the highest level of education created two separate images of young women: one was the non-working woman, taking care of her family, while the other image conveyed the character of the single, careerist woman. Traditional values were associated with the former type, while negative features of a stereotypical single woman were assigned to the other one. There was a real divide between the two types; it was unimaginable for the group that the two spheres could be reconciled. As this is a typical psychological defence mechanism, we may ask whether it is referring to their internal antagonism: that aspirations for the “denounced” life-style exist on the one hand but are rejected on the conscious level. Or whether this divide derives from the inclination towards both value-systems, which are considered irreconcilable?

As we will see later on, this is specifically characteristic to this group, so naturally the question arises why this is so. Is it because for the members of this, i.e. people with higher education, it is realistic to attain the life-style of the young professional and is not relegated to imagination only? Or maybe they themselves are also exposed to the danger of losing human values should they get into the “pushy, climbing, single” world? Or maybe the subconscious feeling that this has already happened?

b) The image of young male employee – A modern life

	Title	Characteristics of this life-style	Adjectives used
Low educational level	“Modern life”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strives to use all the elements of a modern life – Healthy life-style – Striving for a European life-style – Wealth and warmth – Freedom – Family – Able to make use of opportunities – Moving forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dynamic – Self-realising – Ambitious – Determined
Medium educational level	“Everyday life of a young man”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Doing sports – Cares about himself – Plays with the children – Likes travelling 	
High educational level	“Work and fun” or “Dream and reality”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Work is not joy for him but routine – Treadmill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Monotone – Routinised

Group 1: low educational level

Nothing was found unattractive in the life-style of the imagined young male employee. He was imagined as an upper manager or a doctor typically, as these are the people who can create such a life-style for themselves in group members' opinion. He may be working in some EU institution or somewhere else abroad.

This image was contrasted to that of the young female employee:

Teri, woman, 49: This is a more complete image than the montage of a young female employee.

Zoli, man, 43: So it is more human than the previous young woman employee, ..., so there is much more life in it.

There was no disagreement about the image of the young male employee, which reflected a desired image of an employee.

Teri, woman, 49: I think most of us would like such a life, it represents our desires maybe.

Group 2: mid-level education

At first an ideal world was depicted where everything fits: sports, family, travelling, work, leisure, etc. It is attractive as it has been able to accumulate a lot of material wealth although it was at the expense of rushing and stress. So it is acknowledged that life cannot be that easy for this man either, as sacrifice is needed but at the beginning of the debate this does not turn negative:

Etelka, woman, 51: ...it is not certain that everything is so nice and easy ..., even if he achieve these things with support from his family. Because he may have achieved success that way too. And he could have achieved it by being an expert and his is well-paid.

Anett, woman, 25: I think today's world is exactly about this, is someone can afford to have kids, then it will be possible for him to do sports, to go on holiday, to have a car and a bike. ... That one has to work an enormous amount in order to achieve these. Someone succeeds. If so, then this is an attractive life. Then there are worse cases as well, when you work a lot, you have 2 kids, but you don't have a car. So life can be like this or that. This is a better one, I think. If you have to work, then you should have everything.

However, the burning out syndrome appears again shortly:

Norbi, man, 31: I hold that .. just like the same as the single, careerist woman, he will burn out if he continues with this life-style. Yes. Then comes the previous [image], the old, man, medicines, hospital and cemetery.

Feri, man, 67: It is inevitable that, be it a young woman or man, that he/she will burn out after a while.

Norbi, man, 31: It uses you up. At the age of 18 I put together a list about 10 things I would like to achieve in 10 years, at the age of 28. There was one thing that I managed to achieve: seeing the solar eclipse. Really, but all the others, no -...

So in this group again, an ideal image of a working young man appears who manages to fit everything in but soon it turns out that in reality this can only be achieved by a constant race with time, which will eventually cause serious health problems and untimely death.

Group 3: highest level of education

This montage was prepared by older group members, mostly men. Women and images of family are missing from the picture prepares, or are not given a dominant role. There was broad consensus about the fact that the central element of the picture was work, which was indicated by the fact that pictures of a range of occupations were selected for the montage. It was also found positive that he has a job at all, given the insecure economic situation in the country.

The image of a young male employee was less discernable as other images. The montage included one or two pictures of leisure activities as well but what got into the centre was work carried out in various settings. It is as if older group members were looking back on their youth and doing so what stood out was working.

c) Older female employee – This would be so nice...**Group 1 – low educational level**

The montage depicting older female employees was titled “Older employee, her family, and her everyday life”. Her everyday life was seen as family-centred, calm, balanced, composed and positive and her world reflected the world group members live or would like to live. The most attractive elements of this life were considered self-sacrifice and establishing a home, a family and finding peace. The issue of health also arose as a factor determining the quality of life, and protecting health also came up as an example of positive behaviour. The values of this life are its goals and the ability to live life in view of these. Material security was established, maybe together with her family, and a stable family background was created also. The older female employee is the key person in the family, it is her who holds the family together and who guides it, not the older man. A mother image emerges from the montage: she is the centre of the family; she is creative force and ability. She has realised her goals, both at work and in her family too. This casts a sharp contrast to the image of a young female employee who cannot reconcile the two domains of her life. She likes nature and likes cooking as well. She is altruistic; almost as if she did not exist but dissolved in other people. Her hobbies are household work and looking after grandchildren. She goes to work by tram, in contrast to the young woman who has a luxury car to drive her to her workplace. She has an administrative job, others thought she was the chief editor of a newspaper, but there was consensus on that she works in an office, in a white-collar job. Nothing was found unattractive in the life of this employee. The central element of the picture was more generations living together; this is what expressed the main theme as group participants expressed. Her goal in life is to preserve security and the wealth she has established.

Group 2 – mid-level education

The montage this group prepared of older female employee depicted a pensioner. The picture was called “Multicoloured” and depicted the everyday of older female employees: family life, taking care of the family and some hobbies. The days are spent working - “going to exhibits or sitting in a poll are dreams only”. Similarly to the previous group, group 2 formed the image of older female employee to resemble their own.

Feri, man, 67: She cooks for the family, after cooking she will do the washing up.

Feri, man, 67: If she has time, she goes to a botanical garden with her grandchildren.

Judit, woman, 45: She shows the photos at her workplace. ... It is like our life”

“Moderator: How do people live in this world?”

Maja, woman, 55: There is nothing extraordinary in it. They live their everyday lives.

Moderator: *And what is this everyday life like?*

Maja, woman, 55: *Good and bad. It's mixed.*

Feri, man, 67: *Full of work."*

Similarly to the opinion of the group with low educational level, this group also sees the older female employee as a 'Mother Goose' who gathers her family around her and takes care of them.

Judit, woman, 45: *So usually an older woman is rather, so she is the centre of the family, from a certain point of view her life is about serving her family and worrying about her family I think.*

Feri, man 67: *She acts like Mother Goose.*

Judit, woman 45: *That's right.*

The central element of the picture is harmony. At the same time, problems of an older employee also came up:

...if she is looking for a job, then she is in a very difficult situation. ... So there is this security only if she has a stable job, and a stable husband, so she has a stable background, financial background. (Judit, woman, 45)

Over 40 she can't really find a job. Unless she starts her own enterprise. At that age people are written off. (Feri, man, 67)

Exploiting human capacity to the fullest possible degree, I think. It begins at young age, the smarter the person is, the more he/she will be exploited (...) He/she will be exploited 100%, nothing will be left for the family, I think. This is the direction we seem to be going into. (...) People sat outside in the garden and nobody thought of working after retiring. Nowadays everyone has a job beside pension; they exploit themselves more and more. (Attila, man, 35)

What is going to happen to her in the following 10 years is not totally up to her. The problem is that, because if it were up to her, then a nice period would come, another nice period (...). This is one thing, I think, when one has calmed down and can spend more time on her hobbies. This is what should be happening but what will actually happen varies. Usually work, of course, because we live in a world like that. (Anett, woman, 25)

So, let's say, if someone is good at something, then he/she will be good at it after retiring as well, he/she will start her own business. So he/she will have her monthly pension (...) plus he/she will launch a business and he/she will have two sources... (Attila, man, 35)

But really, values have somehow changed, so this fine, nostalgic world is coming to an end. So in the pictures it is present, sometimes we are still striving for it but nowadays it is very difficult to find harmony. So that era has almost disappeared. (Attila, man, 35)

Group 3: highest level of education

Group 3 seemed to represent an image of an older female employee, which was very different from theirs:

Well, she is perhaps a typical older employee from the countryside, who doesn't really have the possibility to find a job. So, for want of something better, she does cleaning at the local school, as can be seen on the picture there. (Klári, woman, 53)

She lives together with her mother who is very old. Their income, her small salary and her mother's modest pension, is quite low, therefore they try complementing it with growing vegetables in the garden. Her mother has long learned how to dry fruits and vegetables, selling dried fruits is how they try to get some extra income. They have a pig... They use wood for the heating. They have a small garden where they grow flowers. As a form of entertainment, besides watching TV they often go to the local cultural

centre to listen to folk concerts. Well, church, faith, and religion are very important in their lives. (Klári, woman 53)

The montage was titled “Village life today. This is where we ended up” by the group which prepared it, which consisted of older participants. This world was described with the adjectives apathy, sadness, constraints and resignation.

Moderator: *What was the past 10 years like of this life?*

Melinda, woman, 25: *The same.*

Gábrriel, man, 41: *Time has stopped.*

Betty, woman, 30: *That’s all.*

Moderator: *And what will it be like in the next 10 years?*

Betty, woman, 30: *The same.*

Melinda, woman, 25: *Or maybe worse.*

Klári, woman, 53: *If the mother dies, then much worse.*

Others contested the gloomy picture.

Well, (...) my mother is not young and she is still happy and has a balanced life. And she is not the only one in my environment who lives like that. So it’s not necessarily money that is important for them, they can be happy regardless, and you can’t tell looking at them that they had a difficult childhood. (Melinda, woman, 25)

There were positive aspects of the life depicted as well: it conveyed the sense of co-operation between generations, the ability to work hard and honesty. Simplicity was also mentioned as an attractive element of this life, together with resourcefulness, which appears when trying to live under difficult conditions.

Moderator: *what kind of desires and goals do you think she has?*

Melinda, woman, 25: *I think, everyday things.*

Betty, woman, 30: *... daily survival.*

Betty, woman, 30: *The family of course. (...) So happiness in the family, not only between 2 generations but with the following one as well. So if a child grows up in an honest and loving environment, then it is certain that he/she will help the family also...*

An older woman, therefore, represents traditional values, family, home, as well as co-operation and compromise. This was true in the case of all groups. This image seems to represent the desire for what old age should represent as opposed to how it appears nowadays: full of struggle. Interestingly, this struggle and frustration was attributed on older man. Given that in the montages older men were placed into the world of work, while older women were relegated to life at home, it may reveal the desire that private life should not be frustrating, as the world of work is already like that. The desire is expressed again that life should be what it was in an imagined past when traditional values and roles structured life: men were the breadwinners, while women took care of the home. Or if this is not possible, then at least further changes should not happen as those are – as we have seen at the exercise ‘Imagined worlds’ – frightening and unpredictable.

d) *The image of older male employee – fulfilment versus hopelessness*

Out of the three groups, group 2 of people with mid-level educational background saw the prospects for older male employees the gloomiest: group members agreed almost unequivocally that there is nothing attractive in their life which is a constant struggle for

survival. Group 1 projected their desires for a balanced and harmonious life into older male employees, while group 3 represented this employee group in antagonism: a burnt-out careerist as opposed to a calmed down, family man.

	Title	Characteristics of this life-style	Adjectives used
Low educational level	“A piece of life”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Striving for balance between work, family – Married; they have achieved something in life – Ethos of hard work which he learned from father 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Balanced – Exciting – Not afraid of challenges
Medium educational level	“The End” or “ER”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trying to survive – Fear of illness – Inability to keep pace with the world, this causes health problems – No future, no prospects – There is no starting again if something bad happens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Depressing – Hopeless
High educational level	“This is what I have been able to achieve”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Family-centred man: – Learning, trying to keep pace with time and changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Calmed down, fulfilment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Burnt-out careerist: – Urge to prove something 	

Group 1: low educational level

In group 1, the montage prepared represented the group members’ desired life-style for their older days. This is an active life characterised by the balance between work and family, as well as ease. The central element of the montage was considered the picture of a house:

This house, as I imagine it, is a multi-generational house, where children and grandchildren are together with the grandfather and the father. (Csilla, woman, 29)

The life-style differs from the current life of group members in that their life now lacks stability and calmness.

Moderator: In what does this world differ from your everyday world?

Csilla (woman, 29): Our life is not as balanced as what we tried to show, I think.

Gábor (man, 28): I would like for myself such a life, such a balanced life when I grow old ... (...)

Andi (woman, 32): Well, what we lack is stability and calmness.

The most striking feature here is the calm and happy life contrasted with their own, which consists of rushing and insecurity. It seems as they were looking forward to getting out of the world of work, which seems stable, maybe because of the pension which seems more secure than their salaries in light of the possibility to be made redundant any day.

Group 2: mid-level education

When presenting the montage, group 2 foresaw the worst for older male employees, which is indicated by the title given to the picture and by the characteristics they listed. Not only did they see practically no prospects for them but also their ability to learn new things, especially using new technological equipment, was questioned. This was contested though during the discussion of the montage:

The fact that someone is old does not mean that he/she is stupid; maybe more time is needed for him/her, than for a twenty something, to learn or memorise. But he/she is able to learn; at least I can learn what I want to learn. (Maja, woman, 55)

It was also acknowledged that although work may take longer for older people, they are more thorough than younger workers and with the expertise and the experience they have accumulated; they may be able to enhance work.

Group 3: highest level of education

With regard to the image of an older male employee, the montage was divided into two parts again. One side represented the careerist, businessman-type who gets burnt out and collapses, figuratively speaking. His condition is further exacerbated by the appearance of illnesses.

The other side of the montage represented a family-centred man who has already calmed down; in his case there is no illness. A common element of both types was the image of a clock, which was meant to represent that men are always pressed for time. The montage was prepared by young people (Melinda, woman, 25; Gábor, man, 25; Zsanett, woman, 26; Betty, woman, 30; Erzsébet, woman, 39). After the presentation of the picture, there was disagreement, however, on the representation of older male employees voiced by members of the other groups, which consisted of people over 45. The view was voiced that people at that age are usually unemployed, as employers prefer younger people when hiring employees:

... I know it very well from HR people that when they look at a CV, they look at the date of birth at first and if the applicant is over 40, then they do not respond (...) so here an older male employee is typically unemployed these days... (János, man, 48)

The desire to transmit knowledge was also mentioned as a contrast to the careerist side of the montage:

There are people who work not out of any compulsion but because they have enormous experience and they would like to pass it on to others, and would also like to see what he/she is still capable of doing as because someone is 50, he/she is at the zenith of his/her strength. (Klári, woman, 53)

Just as in the case of the young female employee, it seems that in the eye of younger people, there are only two paths for older male employees as well: either they finally “calm down” and relax more, spend more time with their grand-children and family, or still spend a lot of time on their work and try to “prove” something, which will inevitably lead them to illness and burning out. This was modified by the views expressed by older employees but it is interesting that for younger people there seem to be two paths only: working a lot, which qualifies in their interpretation as careerism, or not work that much and spend more time with the family. It is similar to the divide observed in the case of young woman workers.

e) Conclusion from montage exercise

Based on the above, the question arises: what does it mean and why is it that all three groups - although not at the same rate and, as we will see at other tasks, with tiny differences - have a really negative view of the young working woman. They are seen as pushy careerists who do not care about having a family, only about their career and success at work. It was possible for group members to imagine a different type of young women as well but the image of a pushy careerist young woman was the most dominant type that emerged. The image of old female employees is almost the opposite: they are imagined as experienced, accepting and

friendly, and as persons who can give warmth. Speaking about them evokes associations of home and peace.

On the other hand young men are seen as persons who stand for the ideal and the perfect: their working for a career does not seem to be distasteful to group participants although they do everything for it just as well a young women do. Nevertheless it is accepted and expected from them and they are respected for being able to do it. The groups sympathised with old men for loosing their ability to fulfil the tasks that the young are still able to fulfil, as neither their bodies nor society support them in it. The lessening of bodily strength is normal, but the little support old people get in Hungary is not. They do not get sympathy or respect from the young, neither material support from the rent-system. In the group discussion this last point has got the strongest emphasis.

What can be the cause of the strong difference we see in the image of men and women? Why are young women seen as much “worse” both morally and with respect to humanity than the older ones? And why is it not so in the case of man? Why is it that it is possible to see the earlier young man in picture of the old man, whereas the same is impossible in the case of the women?

According to our hypotheses this could be explained by the rapid changes of social history, which affected the place of women the most. The emancipated woman – and in this respect Hungary and the whole of Eastern Europe is special within Europe – has appeared much later than at other places parallel to the non-existence of feminism mentioned already. This causes this type of mentality in our groups and the discrepancy between the younger woman and the older woman. The successful woman who builds a career cannot be old, she must be young and her behaviour is completely different from her ancestors. Because of the fear of loosing traditional values, these women who turned towards new values instead of old ones and give priority to their independence, are seen as nasty witches. This perception seems to be very decisive. In a sense this seems to be in accordance with what we have seen in the imagined worlds earlier: it would be nice to live in an ideal world, where human, and among them family, values are regarded as important.

3.2.3 Exercise 3: discussing quotations from narrative interviews

In the course of this exercise, participants heard several excerpts from the narrative interviews we prepared, which were related to generations at work. For a translation of these quotations, see Annex III.

The reaction of the different educational groups to the quotations was very different. The least educated group was the only one, which reacted in an absolutely positive and responsive way. They enjoyed the discussion and their reactions to this exercise were similar to their imagined world in Exercise 1.: conflicts between different generations would immediately be solved if everyone would be able to talk about problems with all the others.

Interestingly, the second group understood the generational problem revealed in the interview excerpts as conflicts between generations within families, where the issue is that the older generation forces his/her ideas about the right ways of life onto the younger generation. Generational conflicts at the workplace also came up in the course of discussing the quotations. In this context older people were blamed for sticking to their old habits and

routines, although contrary opinions were also voiced admitting the importance of the experience and competence, which older people have.

The third group practically refused to go into discussing the texts. Our impression is that the reason behind the differences between the various groups in their willingness to comment the selected excerpts is that more educated people would see this sort of discussion superficial, whereas for the first group it was an opportunity to have a discussion at a level of abstraction which they do not normally get to in their everyday life and this resulted in a sort of intellectual excitement. The second group seemed to be in between in their relation to the task, just as they are in between the two other in education.

3.2.4 Exercise 4: list of traits

In the last exercise we asked participants to characterise the above-mentioned four groups (young and old women, young and old men) by assigning 60 personality traits (See Annex III for a translation of the list) to the group it is most characteristic to. The results of this exercise complement well those of the montages.

What seemed to be worth analysing the most was that there were only a few traits which were ascribed to one of the groups only, so we took them out and analysed them according to the following hypotheses: the characteristics ascribed to a certain group reveal in what way people in our exercise think the group is demarcated from the other three, which can be seen as a negative characterisation of the group. On the other hand the other characteristics that were in almost all the other cases assigned to either the other group of the same age or of the same gender, and they were in accordance with the common stereotypes of women/men and old/young.

a) *Group 1: low educational level*

Interestingly this group has an almost idealistic, almost kitschy view of old women on the labour market: they are seen different in such traits from the others. As a counterpoint, there is hostility against old men; they are differentiated according to negative traits from the other 3 groups. Thus old women would appear as “good old grannies” who are able to bear the intolerable nasty old man. As if it were a fairy-tale where the youngest brother is helped by the ugly but kind and helpful old hag, who helps him to hide in order to get the golden hair from the monster coming home. Would it be a dream or wishful thinking of the group? Would they be happier if they left reality for the world of fairy tales? Their answers in the first exercise had the same message.

What is also striking that neither young women, nor young men were characterised by any trait separately. Anything that was considered true for them was true for some other group, too, usually the other group in the same age or the same gender, or anybody.

b) *Group 2: medium level of education*

This group could not find any trait that would have characterised young men alone, while they all the other three groups have got quite a few traits on their own. Still, it is surprising that most of these traits are negative, especially in the case of men. However, the negative traits of the old man render them as unfortunate, miserable, vulnerable and helpless, while these negative traits are compensated by loyalty and experience. Young men are seen as almost immorally idle, lazy and pushy, who would like to achieve success at the expense of others

but they are also thought so clumsy that they cannot achieve it, and the only trait that makes them a little more worthy of love and humane is that they are sad.

It is interesting, that in contrast to some previous exercises, here young women were interpreted as having mainly positive traits differentiating them from others. We could say that they are seen just like young male employees with the difference that while in the case of men all the traits specific to them were negative, while in the case of women the differentiating traits were positive. Young men are unsuccessful, unpleasant careerists, whereas of wangle young women is something valuable, and they are also joyful.

c) Group 3: high level of education

In this group mainly young men were seen as very different from all the others. They have got the most traits, which were thought specific to them only. Participants' view of this group is fairly negative, especially if we look at them from the point of view of work. The question arises who would like to work with, supervise or be supervised, by such an obstinate, irresponsible and raffish colleague? There is only one positive trait, quickness, which is surely not enough to compensate all the negative ones.

Interestingly enough, none of the other groups were really differentiated from the whole population, except old women, who were seen as altruistic.

Table – Distinct traits ascribed to employee groups

	Young man	Young woman	Older man	Older woman
Group 1 - low educational level				
Kind				1
Self-sacrificing				1
Loyal				1
Selfish			1	
Morose			1	
Group 2 - medium level of education				
Lazy	1			
Loser	1			
Pushy	1			
Sad	1			
Crafty		1		
Cheerful		1		
Cunning		1		
Crafty		1		
Efficient		1		
Helpless			1	
Experienced			1	
Morose			1	
Slow			1	
Loyal			1	
Group 3 - high level of education				
Prompt	1			
Raffish	1			
Loser	1			
Irresponsible	1			
Obstinate	1			
Selfless				1

Surprisingly the view of young women in the second group contradicts totally their image depicted in the montage. The reason behind it can be that this group may be flirting with the acceptance of emancipation of women, with the fantasy of getting into a better-qualified group where emancipation is much more a reality. In the view of the other two groups women were not depicted so much more negatively. It is also possible that a group process was also present, which was able to tame strong negative views expressed at the beginning.

4. Instead of conclusion

It seems to be too early for us to draw a complete conclusion from all the results we have seen above. However, it is possible to point out those elements of our discussion above, which seem most interesting and important to us.

As it was mentioned earlier, what seemed to be the main factor of one's relation to work based on analysing our interviews – besides the purely psychological differences – was social history, the societal changes Hungary has undergone in the past 60 years. On the other hand, it is also superficial if we call factors purely psychological, as all of them are influenced by the societal environment of the individual and all the other individuals constituting his/her environment. Still, some factors are mainly psychological, while others are nearer to the historical, societal changes.

If we take these latter ones into consideration, we cannot forget about the decisively different periods of communism, i.e. the regime of Mátyás Rákosi and that of János Kádár a decade later. The first one could be characterised by overall fear present in society, where you are seen as an enemy, if you are not an activist of us. And even then you could turn out to be an enemy. The Kádár era, on the other hand, offered a compromise “only”: if you are not our enemy you are our friend, as János Kádár formulated it, which meant that if you do not express your hostility overtly, you can achieve anything.

Then the communist regime collapsed and the change of the regime came in 1989, which also brought forth a decisive change in the economic system.

These facts are of course not new to us, only their decisive effect on the relation to work of our interviewees. What gives the biggest importance to our results coming from the analysis of the focus groups is where we formulated the question: how people see the different generations of the two genders. And the results were striking:

The advent of market economy created an economic and labour market environment which was new and – based on the results of the focus groups it is fair to say – ambiguous to the generations socialised after WWII. The economic system brought with it the necessity of successful adjustment and adaptation to it, which also meant changes in values as well. The attitudes of the socialist worker have proven to be dysfunctional for the most part, even with its positive features, such as solidarity.

In the view of older generations – which includes people over 35, who socialised under socialism – young workers who proved successful in the labour market are not positive actors at all. All their fears and unease with regard to the new era are projected into the “man of new times” who turned out to be the young successful women.

Why women?

Although the employment of women is not a new phenomenon in Hungary, as it came true under socialism, but self-realising women building a career exploded into Hungarian society in the past 10 years. This group has undergone far more spectacular changes than any other group; successful men have origins in the pre-communist times but women do not.

Besides, the values of Hungarian society are very conservative and traditional up to the present day. Thus, the young, successful woman is denounced, as she is seen as a careerist only who turns her back on traditions but who has power and existence just as a man. Interviewees find such kind of a woman worthless, as the goals of a career woman – money, success and power – are not attractive for them. Her life-style and goals are impossible to attain for this generation if they have not been attained by now, therefore this distantiating from the world of young career women can be interpreted as a way to reduce cognitive dissonance. While it is hard to tolerate the success of young male professionals, the dissonance is not that big as men do not transgress their traditional roles by being successful.

It is interesting that as a counterpoint to this, the image of older women is the image of “a mother everyone would like to have”. While participants of group interviews were able to imagine young men growing old, there was no path between young career women to the idealised “mother-grandmother” only if the woman in the end gives up her career and consciously chooses kitchen and taking care of the children.

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Chapter 6: report from Italy

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1. Methodological considerations

1.1 Narrative interviews

1.1.1 Selection of the informers and interviews overview

We decided not to focus on any particular sector but rather to select our sample so as to include: employees; erratically employed persons; and freelance workers. The idea underlying this choice is to represent the variety and facets of worker typologies in order to get closer to the description of the possible ways of the relations to work. Therefore we privileged a random selection both for narrative and focus groups target, for its being more based on typology of people, or on variety of work, rather than on typology of organisations. However we chose to conduct a series of three interviews in the same organisation, involving people of the three different age groups, with equivalent qualifications, different seniority.

In order to restrict the number of criteria so to avoid having only one person for each category of workers, we decided to eliminate the “unemployed”.

Table 1 - Summary of the interviews

	Sex	Age group (Nb)	Educa-tion	Profession	Sector	Family	Child
1_Silvia	W	G1(29)	Middle	Theatre Teacher	Private - Education	Divorced	1
2_Luigi	M	G2 (42)	High	Administrative Manager	Electronic corporation	Married	2
3_Giampiero	M	G3 (64)	Middle	Technical consultant	Madical service company	Married	2?
4_Daniele	M	G2 (37)	Low	Mechanical worker	Mechanical industry	Divorced	1
5_Barbara	W	G2 (36)	Middle	Manager audio video	Electronic corporation	Married	2
6_Davide	M	G2 (34)	Middle/ High	Blue collar/Technician Fitness coach	Electronic company University	Single	0

					Fitness club		
7_Mina	W	G3 (56)	Low	Employee; shop keeper	Steel company/Commerce	Married	2
8_Andrea	M	G1 (26)	Low	General manager	Small Service company	Cohabit	0
9_Giovanna	W	G2 (40)	Medium	Employee-credit supervisor	Electronic corporation	Married	2
10_Eleonora	W	G1 (27)	High	Technical Employee	Electronic corporation	Single	0
11_Guido	M	G1 (29)	Medium	Foreman	Constructions	Married	2
12_Tina	W	G3 (51)	Medium	Administration	Public Sector-University	Cohabit	0
13_Piero	M	G3 (64)	High	Engineer	Free lance	Married	1
14_Elisa	W	G1 (28)	Middle	Dance, Theatre Teacher	Private - Education	Single	0
15_Marina	W	G1(22)	Middle/High	Sales Promoter	Large Distribution	Single	
16_Tommaso	M	G1 (26)	High	Software developer	ICT sector	Single	0
17_Caludio	M	G3 (52)	Low	Shop owner	Commerce	Married	2
18_Valentina	W	G3 (57)	High	High school Teacher	Public sector	Married	2
19_Alessandra	W	G1 (29)	High	Chief administration in the family company	Private sector – small chemical industry - collecting back and recycling of expanse polyurethane	Cohabit	0
20_Mara	W	G1(28)	Low	Beautician	Commerce Beauty centre	Cohabit	0
21_Yodith	W	G2(33)	High	Cleaner	Middle size company	Single	0
22_Mikail	M	G2(39)	Low	Truck driver	Delivery company (UPS)	Married	1
23_Massimo	M	G2 (36)	Medium	Shop assistant	Commerce	Cohabit	0
24_Elena	W	G1 (25)	High	Human resources Manager	TLC company	Single	0
25_Ugo	M	G3(54)	Medium		Free lance	Married	1

Table 2 - The Sample

Age	Nb	Gender		Education		
		Women	Men	High	Medium	Low
Below 30	10	7	3	24_Elena 16_Tommaso 10_Eleonora 19_Alessandra	14_Elisa 1_Silvia 15_Marina 11_Guido	8_Andrea 20_Mara
31-50	8	3	5	2_Luigi 6_Davide 21_Yodith	9_Giovanna 5_Barbara 23_Massimo	4_Daniele 22_Mikail
Above 50	7	3	4	18_Valentina 13_Piero	3_Giampiero 11_Tina 25_Ugo	17_Claudio 7_Mina
	25	25		9	10	6

Table 3 - Summary by family and level of education

	Family				Level of education			Women + Men
	Men no child	Men with children	Women no child	Women with children	Low	Medium	High	
Below 30	2	1	6	1	2	4	4	10
30-50	2	3	1	2	2	3	3	8
Above 50	0	4	1	2	2	3	2	7
Total	4	8	8	5	6	10	9	25

1.1.2 Methodological design

We conducted 25 semi-structured interviews. In choosing this approach among the possible paths to the empirical investigation the aim was to combine the project task and expectation – to provide an “in-depth biographical vision of the relation to work” (cf. Sprew proposal) with the feasibility of a research method. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate because they (i) are a way to assess the main objects of research, (ii) to make it easier to follow up during the research process (in case new issues should emerge from the first series of interviews, or to deal with any potential need to retarget/extend/narrow the research frame), and (iii) are advantageous in the analysis phase.

The structure of the interview is loose. The interview is not built on a rigid sequence of questions, but rather is organised around *broad themes* that are proposed to the interviewees to be freely developed by them. What results is a compromise between leaving the interviewee free to express him- or herself, and guiding him or her through the topics of the interview. In brief, the main strategy in constructing and conducting the interview is “to be directive while embracing a non directive style.”⁶⁶ (Roger, 1942) The interviews are expected

66. On this point see Rogers (1942).

to last between two and three hours so as to allow the interviewee to move through work episodes, education paths, family relationships, significant relationships, detours, constraints, and opportunities coming from the broader socio-political context, and to express values, expectations, and discontents.

Life stories are very useful and effective in grasping social *processes*: connections between situations, inter-subjective relationships, and key episodes and actions. The final aim is to extract from the narratives of those who lived or are living “inside” a social object, information and descriptions that can be analysed and combined in order to help the understanding of the social object.

We focus on the individual level in order to give voice to the subjects at whom the scientific analysis is ultimately addressed (Catani 1983, Pourtois – Desmet 1988), but our interest is to find a balance between the particular and the general. An ethnosociological approach is effective in this regard. If we deal with what Bertaux calls the “situational categories” (being a single mother with children; being a 30-year-old without a stable job, etc.) we should be able both to take the subject’s point of view and to gain insight into some more general logic of action.

According to the methodological frame described above, the grid of the interviews addressed the key research questions and was structured so as to aim at the three main groups of information essential for drawing the life stories and allowing analysis: (i) information concerning the subject’s biography, personality, moments of change and transformation as well as habit, (ii) information on the relationships with significant others—the “strong and stable interpersonal relationship” (Bertaux 2003)—or those relationships people have with relatives, partners, close friends, but also with bosses and colleagues, (iii) information on the social structure or system the interviewee exists in.

These three levels of meaning come out both from description of facts, and from representation of moment or status of the subjects, their personality, their description of the status of interpersonal relationship. Therefore, the broad questions of the interview addressed facts and their representation.

To address these issues, the interviews focused on:

- 1) work stories (present tasks and working conditions, education, family background);
- 2) relation to work (is it important? for what reason/purpose is it important? what are the elements that qualify work as good or bad?);
- 3) relation between work and other spheres of life (work as central/peripheral; the balance between work and life; work and life choices);
- 4) relation among colleagues of different generations (whether there is the *perception of a conflict* between generations concerning work; whether the real or imagined conflict is due to the specific features that work gained in the last years of the millennium, or whether it is a conflict we might call physiological insofar as it concerned the relationship between different age groups in general rather than at the present moment. In this case, not *generation* but *age* would be the central independent variable for understanding ideas and representations of work);

- 5) the broader socio-political context. The underlying hypothesis is that it is more appropriate to talk of a “process of individualisation”—intended as the quest for autonomy and self—realisation in different fields, life, work, relationships—regarded as an historical process that began with the Enlightenment, and in which modernisation is rooted (Paci 2005). When read as a process individualisation⁶⁷ is a factor of transformation rather than the effect of the economics and political dynamics of the context (or the rationale for the contraposition between the two attitudes of solidarity and egoistic and competitive individualism shaped by the interaction between market and politics.).

1.1.3 Method for the analysis

In analysing the interviews we chose to focus on the *main emerging themes* (Bertaux) and to compare the way they are approached and narrated by the different interviewees. These main themes are partly the direct result of the scheme that has been used to conduct the interviews, but are also enriched by aspects emphasised by the interviewees during their narrations. According to Bertaux, the biographical interview can be read as the story of a person as narrated in a particular moment of the person’s life, and under the influence of the relationship with the interviewer. The interview assumes the shape that the narrator chooses to give it, and the stimuli offered by the interviewer never work in a neutral way, but are always subjected to the interpretation of the narrator and to what she/he decides to tell us.

The interaction between objective and subjective elements is one of the distinctive points of biographical interviews. In analysing the stories our effort has been to work with both the objective and subjective nuances of the story, trying to respect the way in which the details of this story have been told to us. Often the narrator appears to want to tell her/his story in a certain way, and the genuine narration emerges only after some time dedicated to careful listening of what the interviewee prefers to tell us. We noticed that after some time (our interviews lasted from one and one half to three hours), the narrator loses control of the narration and starts to become more genuine. Both phases of the interview, the more controlled and the more genuine one, are important in order to draw out the work and life story of the protagonist. For a more precise definition of the co-presence of different “stories” in the interviews we can recall Bertaux, who stresses that the life story is an effort to tell something that really happened and in which objective realities external to the subject are filtered by subjective narration.

The interview presents at least three orders of reality:

- the historic-empirical reality, the story as it has been lived, what really happened and when. This is the so-called biographical trajectory (Bertaux 1998);
- the psychic and semantic reality, consisting of what the subject thinks now of what she/he has lived, of the present knowledge and judgment of the biographical trajectory;

67. Habermas (1987) holds that the process of individualisation is the humane drive for emancipation, self-awareness, and self-determination, while Sen (1994) speaks of the desire of every person to govern his or her own life.

- the discursive reality of the story as it comes out from the interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer, namely what the subject decides to tell us, what she knows about her own story.

The analysis of the interviews was not aimed at understanding how much we can trust the narrator—how close her/his narration is to the empirical reality—but rather at reconstructing facts and connecting them to interpretations. In particular, our analysis of the interviews moves between different levels of abstraction, firstly to isolate the distinctive elements of the story—as evidenced by the themes of the biographies—and to make possible *a transversal analysis of the different stories*, and a *comparative analysis* between young and old people's narratives; and secondly, to underline the link between the personal story and more general social and political events.

Our analysis consists of three parts:

a. Transversal analysis of the content. This first level of the analysis develops as a recollection of some main descriptive information, organised in two groups: i) biographic data, family background and present family situation; education, work trajectory and status (the “historic – empiric reality”); ii) what the subject thinks and values in work and life (the “psycho-semantic reality”). The intention is to provide good descriptions of the phenomenon we find in the narratives before trying to interpret them. As Bertaux underlines, the important thing is to provide thorough descriptions of the object we are examining, because in depth lies the path to generalisation. In addition to these two orders of realities, as we recalled above, we need to consider the special reality that is created by the dialogic setting, the “discursive reality”. The subjects tell us just as much as what they want about how they feel, how they judge their path, and we must understand how far we can trust these life stories (Bertaux 1999). This information, or descriptive variables, will be the basis for more quantitative considerations to be provided in a subsequent report.

b. Identification of the *main emerging themes* and of the relevance and tension between the two dimensions of work. In the first dimension we compare the *instrumental meaning* of work with its *social* and *symbolic* ones (Paugam 2000, Drancourt - Roulleau-Berger 2001, Zoll 1992). In the second dimension we contrast *work as central* with *work as peripheral* (see *State of the Art*). The two dimensions are regarded as the qualifying elements of the relation to work. In this step we organise our empirical evidence so as to investigate these two dimensions and to test how much they actually weigh in work trajectories. This in-depth analysis of the interviews focuses on the dimensions of work underlying the different stories. The themes are drawn starting from the sharp contraposition between two models: *work is the centre of life/work is not the centre of life*. We tried to identify some nuances in the relation between work and life that graduate the passage from the two opposite models of relation. In analysing the interviews we tried to balance what people claim to value in work; what they claim to desire and pursue, and things as they emerge from the narration of examples and from the fact of their life and work trajectories. In some cases the protagonists tell one kind of story about their relation to work until the very end of the interview, when different facts emerge. For each interview we tried to identify the main theme, but it emerged that most interviews consist of more than one theme.

We identify the emerging themes of the stories as the expression of the kind of relation to work and life issues, which allows us to characterise the single story and to compare stories both transversally and generationally (Part C).

c. Analysis of the influence of age and generation on the relation to work. By ‘generation’ we mean age in the historical and cultural sense. Starting from a comparative analysis between interviews of young and old people, our aim is to distinguish those elements of the stories that are connected to age, and those connected to generation. Some of the stories suggest that not everything in relation to work is due to generation. This result is particularly important: in describing the present situation of people in their relation to work as one of concurrent needs, and often opposing claims we need to consider how much of this opposition rests on the co-presence of people of different ages, in different phases of their life who therefore express different needs.

The analysis of the narratives, as well as the analysis of the three focus groups, involved a group of 7 people among interviewers and researchers. The general process of the analysis can be described as a progressive *tuning in* to the narrative evidence. We privileged a qualitative approach to analysis—individuation of the themes and understanding of the influence of age and generation variables on relation to work. However, since our perspective is sociological (we are interested in shedding some light on the social phenomenon and not just in comprehending the individual reality expressed by the story) we tried to reach a clearer understanding of the interview results as an “index” (Bertaux) of broader social facts. In developing our analysis we tried to see which of the original assumptions (see D2) could be *rejected* (Popper) and which confirmed by the empirical evidence.

The general issues we intended to deal with may be summarised by the following questions:

- which of the elements resulting from the empirical investigation are connected with *age* and which with *generation*?
- what are the main variables that influence the relation to work within and between generations *other than* age and generation?

The relation to work might be influenced by characteristics of being young, adult, or old independently of historical period or social, economic, and political context.

In addition, we assume that education, family background, type of profession, and gender may weigh as heavily as age and generation in shaping the relation to work.

1.2 Focus group

1.2.1 Methodological design

The method used in this phase of the research was the focus group, with which we intend in the words of Corrao (2001, p. 25): “a technique of gathering data for the social research, based on a discussion in a little group of persons, leaded by one or two moderators, focused on one argument to analysed in depth”. The focus group has its main characteristic on the interaction among participants: they have been chosen to better understand the work orientation among different generation and the relationship among them.

Three different focus groups have been realised from July to September 2007, they have been moderated by two researchers of the Fondazione Regionale Pietro Seveso. The first focus group was composed of 7 participants, the second of 8 participants and the third of 10 participants. The total number of participants in the focus groups were 25 – 7 for the first

focus group, 8 for the second and 10 for the third – divided among the three generations: 9 belonging to the young generation (18-29 years old); 7 to the mid-generation (30-49 years old); 9 to the older generation (50-65 years old).

The main argument to be discussed in the focus group was the social pattern to relation to work among different generations. The main objects of the focus group were the same as the narratives. We structured the questions focus groups revolved around starting from the first evidence of the narratives analysis. The purpose of the focus groups was “to adjust” the empirical enquiry to better the target objects of the project – the process of *tuning in to* – indeed most of the interviews (21 over 25 had already been done when the focus groups took place).

The focus groups have been articulated among three main questions. Each question lasted around 20/25 minutes discussion

- What is work for you?
- Work influences the other ambits of your life and vice versa and how?
- Do you prefer working with people younger, your age or older than you?

The aim of the first question was to verify the different dimensions related to work orientation as they emerge from images, and meaning referred to work. In particular, the elements of instrumental, social and symbolic attribution to work among generations (Paugam 2000, Nicole-Drancourt, Roulleau-Berger 2001, Zoll 1992). In addition this question aimed to highlight the relevance and importance of work for the construction of identity and the role of work in a broader life project. Expected outcomes of this question where the importance of relational elements and the presence/absence of collective dimension.

The aim of the second questions was to see how different spheres of the social action influence the orientation to work and vice versa. The aim was to test the balance between the different spheres among different generations and to see whether the younger generation result more distant, more detached from work. In addition, the aim also to estimate the importance of the different spheres in the life of the person and trying to intercept the impact of new work regulation on the life styles. The presence of a collective dimension

The third question was focused on the different work cultures and practices among generations and the conflicts or tensions among them.

The style used by the moderators was rather directive and structured, which did not hinder the interaction of the participants, but in fact helped the shy participants to express themselves and contained the more dominant participants. The climate was generally pleasant, welcoming, and trustful in order that all participants felt free to express themselves (Kruger 1994, Stewart, Shamdasani 1990). In some passages the atmosphere became excited, especially when the participants were directly confronted and invited to express their opinions on working with people belonging to different generations.

Each focus group lasted about 90 minutes, as recommended by Morgan (1996).

1.2.2 Selection criteria of the participants

The selection of the participants for the three focus groups was based on three main criteria.

- i. Participants were chosen so as to yield a balanced mix of the three generations: young, middle-aged, and old.
- ii. They had to work in organisations in different professions and sectors; to have different levels of qualification, from both blue-collar to white collar. Most of the participants had a full-time and permanent contract with the exclusion of the younger generation and one of the older generation. More precisely, four young people had a limited-term contract and internship, while an older worker had become self-employed after having worked in big organisations for many years.
- iii. We tried to include some workers in the public sector of the two age groups.

In selecting the sample of the three focus groups we decided to include some of the interview participants. The idea was to verify whether some of the issues that had remained unspoken during the interviews, such as the intergenerational relation and in particular the perception of conflict between the generations, would be “performed” during the direct confrontation between generations. The attempt was to go beyond the positive or negative prejudices that had emerged as the main content of the intergenerational relation. Five of the 25 participants in the focus groups had previously taken part to the narratives.

The summary table (tab. 1) includes all the details of the participants of the three focus groups.

Tab. 1 - Summary of focus group participants

	Age group	Sex	Educa- tion	Profession	Sector	Family	Child
<i>First focus group</i>							
1	G1 (26) Tommaso	M	High	Software developer	ICT sector	Single. Lives alone	0
2	G1 (29) Alessandra	W	High	Head of the administration in organisation of the family	Private sector – chemical industry - little Firm involved in collecting back and recycling of expansum polyurethane.	Lives with her partner	0
3	G2 (31) Claudio	M	Low	Clerical worker at the airport Malpensa	Public tertiary sector - transports	Lives with his partner	0
4	G2 (35) Anna	W	Middle	Fashion designer	Private – Textile industry (Fashion)	Single	0
5	G3 (50) Patrizia	W	Middle	Secretary for a frigerator producing Italian organisation	Private – industry sector – manufacturing sector	Divorced and lives with her a three children. Has a new partner.	3

6	G3 (53) Tina	W	Middle	Administration at the University of Milan Bicocca	Public sector – tertiary sector - Public administration/education	Cohabit	0
7	G3 (64) Piero	M	High	Consultant	Private – tertiary sector	Married	2
<i>Second focus group</i>							
8	G1 (25) Maria P.	W	High	Employee	Industry – food production	Cohabits with peers	0
9	G1 (25) Carmela	W	High	Employee	Tertiary – Consultancy	Cohabits with peers	0
10	G1 (27) Lorenzo	M	High	Employee	Tertiary – Public Administration – Education (University)	Lives with his grandmother	0
11	G2 (38) Laura	W	Middle	Manager	Tertiary – bank sector	Single, after divorce	0
12	G2 (36) Silvia	W	Middle	Employee, para-legal	Tertiary – private lawres association	Cohabit	0
13	G2 (46) Cesare	M	Middle	Employee	Tertiary – publishing sector	Cohabit	0
14	G3 (51) Cristina	W	High	Musician and music teacher	Tertiary – public administration education and art	Single, after Divorce	0
15	G3 (57) Valentina	W	High	Italian and history teacher	Tertiary – public administration education	Married	2
<i>Third focus group</i>							
16	G1 (25) Roberto	M	Middle	Employee-technician	Electric industry	Lives with partner	0
17	G1 (26) Manuela	W	High	Employee-Human resources	Tertiary –Private	Single	0
18	G1 (26) Caterina	W	High	Employee	Tertiary – Public Public Administration (Education)	Single	0
19	G1 (28) Sara	W	High	Employee-Sales	Tertiary – Private - Entertainment	Married	0
20	G2 (36) Matteo	M	Middle	Chief editor	Tertiary – Private Publishing group	Single	0
21	G2 (48) Betty	W	High	Personal secretary	Tertiary – Private – bank	Cohabistwith partner	0
22	G3 (50) Assunta	W	High	Employee	Industry- Steel	Married	1
23	G3 (54) Francesca	W	High	Biologist	Tertiary – Public Health Service	Married	1

24	G3 (54) Mimma	W	Low	Employee – IT sector	Tertiary – Private - Entertainment	Widow	1
25	G3 (57) Ernesto	M	Low	Employee	Tertiary – Public Administration (Local authority)	Married	1

2. Generations and work: results of the analysis

2.1 Transversal analysis and general remarks from narratives and focus groups

In this part we provide some general remarks on different aspects of the relation to work, and on the attributes work assumes in different stories within generations and between generations. We refer both to the evidence from both interviews and focus groups.

2.1.1 Family background

To have supportive parents, either on the psychological or material level, emerges as a key variable. However, level of education and work status of the parents seem also to play a decisive role in shaping the attitude toward work. The overall relation to work—the expectations and meanings people attribute to it—appears to be influenced by family background. Supportive parents correspond to the profile of people, and especially young people, who are fond of their job independently of its content and the level of qualification needed to perform it (Daniele G2, Mara G1).

When parents are not a source of support but a source of pressure, the relation to work seems to become more fraught, and the meaning of work more blurred (Davide G2). As a result people may feel trapped in a job they do not really want because it does not meet their values (Eleonora G1), or they may claim attachment to values that are not reflected in their work choices (Marina G1, Mina G3).

They have always been resigned to bad and meaningless jobs, they are without ambition, just like all the female cashiers where I work. (Marina G1)

For my parents work is work, but I would distinguish between good and bad work, where ‘good’ does not simply mean work in a big, solid company... Good for me has a more aesthetic meaning. (Eleonora G1)

Eleonora is divided between the ideal model of having a satisfactory job (a “beautiful” job) and her present situation: she stays in a job she hates because it is a secure job (“work is work”). She seems trapped in a model she dismisses.

The level of education and culture of the family seems to weigh especially heavily where expectations are concerned. Mina is 56; she has worked in Milan most of her life. Her description of the relationship between work and life, and in particular of the role of money, echoes the worries and expectations of the rural society where she was raised. In order to save as much as she can, she has always done many side jobs, thus occupying most of her days with work.

I spend money only when it is needed, as my mother used to say (Mina G3)

We found two strong cases of cognitive dissonance⁶⁸ among the young people with unsupportive parent narratives (Marina [G1] and Eleonora [G1]), and two of what we might call “moderate self-deception” (Mina [G3] and Piero [G3]).

In addition there were also cases of *successful* mediation between the two contrasting models of parents and children, such as that of Silvia (G1)

2.1.2 Centrality of the relational element in the workplace

Both young and old people value the relationship with colleagues in defining work as pleasant or unpleasant, good or bad. The quality of relationships can be an overriding aspect also compared to the content. People see interpersonal relationships as the main source of self-fulfilment or discontent. The social dimension is very important for almost everyone, not only as a value in itself but also for its place in the work atmosphere. It is more pleasant to work in a welcoming and non-confrontational environment.

Work becomes important, it becomes the centre only if you feel at ease with people you are working with, if you manage to realise good relations. (I-U)

When the people you work with look at you as if you were an alien, they do not see what you are able to do, they do not pass you information, or invite you for coffee, it is hard to think positively and feel good... (Eleonora G1)

2.1.3 Money

Money is important not just as a means to acquire other things, but also as a measure of one's values, as an objective sign of recognition and esteem. This is the case especially in women's narratives. In our stories the protagonists become more sensitive to money as they become more aware of their professional value and more secure in their competences.

I worked two years with an apprenticeship contract, then automatically the society had to hire us as standard, salaried workers, but when I had to sign the new contract I was expecting...after two years, some more money, which they did not give me. And there I was upset, because I read it as if...they were not giving me any recognition for what I did, for how much I did, for the way I did it... In these two years I did a lot, I learnt a lot, but here they are not recognising it. (Alessandra G1).

At the end of the year they gave us some money... and this is as well a sign of esteem. (Mara G1)

I wanted to underline that a big part of my unhappiness as a person who does a job comes exactly from this: I don't know the economic value of what I do. (Elisa G1)

Sometime subjects define themselves as people who have an imprecise value. The money problem is often linked to the problem of job regularity.

68. Cognitive dissonance may be defined as the incoherence between motivating values and actual choices, in our case, as far as work and life are concerned. Cognitive dissonance is a state from which individual need to exit in order to maintain a relative psychic equilibrium. The exit consists either in changing one's value, to meet the facts, the real choices, or in modifying the behaviour to make it consistent with the motivating values. On this point see also part c of this analysis.

I do not have a precise value; gym place or theatre school I work for can offer me a different amount of money for the same tasks. They did not offer me a contract, so I get paid an arbitrary amount of money. (Elisa G1).

I had a contract for 4 hours and for the rest was under the table, so they could give me a forfeit they invented, and they paid me 3 euros per hours, the under-the-table hours. (Mara G1)

Especially in some male stories, retribution seems to become more important when you have a family.

My work path started when I was very young. It was a forced path for economic reasons and family reasons. 'Forced path' because I built a family when I was very young. And I started in this job because this was my father's activity. (Ugo G3)

If you want to make money you have to accept compromise, to sacrifice, but I remember my colleague: he was not just a night doorman but he also worked on shifts and in addition to that hotel he worked in other places because he had a family to take care of, and for his sons he would have done... He had his satisfaction because his son will be able to live in the best way that is possible. (Massimo G2)

Today work is important because it is linked to the needs of my family, of my children. (Claudio G3)

In some cases—especially in the older-generation stories—money is seen as important for auto-determination, to be economically independent so as to have economic safety and to be able to buy what one needs or desires for oneself and one's family. This appears as a key element in the story of Mickail (G2), an adult immigrant from Montenegro, and of Valentina (G3), who moved from the south of Italy to Milan to work as a high school teacher.

Money is important; to make enough money is more important than to do a more interesting but less remunerative job, it is more important than to follow your passion, especially when you are a husband and a father. (Mickail G2)

Mikail underlines that his daughter can grow up just like her Italian peers, and he refers to sacrificing his desire and passion in order to allow his daughter to pursue hers.

Valentina left Salerno when she was 23, in 1973, because the possibility of having a stable job as a teacher depended on moving to "High Italy." Valentina values her work as a means toward self-actualisation and economic independence, and she underlines that

I never sacrificed work for family. Family was important, but work was important too. (Valentina G3)

I started substituting for other teachers, but this was always only for a few days and I needed something more stable. So I applied here in High Italy, in different schools and luckily I got this job at the professional school of Sesto San Giovanni (an industrial suburb of Milan). I stayed there 5 years and I also met my husband there, who was a teacher there too. Afterwards we decided to get married and to move to Monza (a small town near Milan) also for the future of the family. This year I retire. And I have been here at the Art Institute from 1978 till now... (Valentina G3)

Valentina is one subject who also took part at the focus group. On both occasions she expressed this vision of work as substantial of her life. During the focus group she said that work helped her during period of crisis and psychological suffering.

2.1.4 Ethics and work

- There is a strong linkage between work and moral issues, especially in young people. This disconfirms the cliché that depicts young people as empty of values and aimed at self-interest and fulfilment of consumerist desires. Silvia left the job when she felt her ethics principles had been disregarded; and Mara would not leave her colleagues alone during the season with the pick of work, even though she had decided to quit the job.
- While is often the middle generation that appears less sensitive to ethical issues, in the in its being under the pressure of a more private demands coming from work and family. This conclusion is as well consistent with hypothesis 20 (D2), of a middle generation under the stress of the two opposite demands. It seems that work and family demands still move together, namely that the delay in building their own family adds to the delay in finding a stable work situation.

2.1.5 Instability

In our narratives instability is often not directly addressed, especially by young people. Some of the stories tell of its opposite, stability, as a source of motivation and growth (Tommaso G1 and Elisa G1) and as the key element for planning a family (Massimo G2). The trade - off stability-content satisfaction is a recurrent feature: to look for stability often means to give in the ambition to do what you studied for, or what you like (Eleonora G1, Silvia G1).

Instability is linked to the new typology of work contracts, and the diversification of the work contract can be perceived as a trick to pay workers less.

I worked as a full time dependent but the company invented a project that does not existed in order to pay me less... (Eleonora G1).

In Eleonora's story the precariousness of the work contract adds to the disillusion of being able to do what she studied for.

They called me both in a metal industry and in a publishing group. The industry economic offer was higher but I hoped to be able to pass from being the secretary to a more stimulating task. But things did not go in this way: it was neither a stimulating nor a training experience. And most of all I could not see any space for improvement. I was treated exactly as, I don't know, the waiter, coffee, photocopy, fax... I decided to quit although I did not have another job because nobody showed any interest in seeing if I had any quality, if I was able to do anything, In the end I told then I had not studied to do that kind of work forever and that I preferred to go somewhere else. (Eleonora G1)

Often instability is the condition older generation attribute to young one. As Valentina G3 admits, “they – the young—are used to flexibility, they are used to diversification of work... things I could have never deal with, so used I am to the stable job in the school” (Valentina G3)

The period of stabilisation in the work world for young generation is extending, and it develops as a process “for trial and error” in which a number of new beginnings, detours, interruptions have substituted the one way of the liner work trajectory. Furthermore, as statistic on fertility rate underlines, this characteristic of work in contemporary society overlaps with the key moments of family life. And the so-called millennium generation—people born from late 70ies on—one will probably be especially effected by the trade off work choices-family choices. Yet the young might be helped in managing this trade –off by

their having a more “conditional attachment” to work. From the analysis of both narrative and focus group it comes out that people from the young generation are “more distant to work” and have a more balanced relationship respect the other social sphere like their family of origin, their own family, their friends, their leisure time. They don’t want to sacrifice part of their selves to work. The word “sacrifice” is banded, which may help them in reconciling work and life demands.

2.1.6 Relation between old and young at work

To compare experience and competencies is a frequent element of the narratives (Andrea G1, Daniele G2, Massimo G2, Ugo G3, Tina G3). Young people can be those who have masters and degree but lack the knowledge of the work; those who are seen as stronger, more in control, more secure of themselves because they enter with a good level of education. People from the older generation experience the tension between formalised knowledge and degrees and experience. People in the older age group often entered the job without any specific qualifications and they “grew on the ground”, they built a solid experience and now they feel “threatened” by younger people who have titles, technological and linguistic skills and, in some cases, as a consequence of this, manages to reach decision-making positions as soon as they enter jobs.

We more rarely observed young people complaining for the lack of competencies of the old generation (one person in the focus groups and one in the interviews), but it seems true that the traditional way of the transmission of skills is interrupted (Hypothesis 16-17). The transmission of skills from “expert master” to “newcomer pupils” is still valid in a certain kind of professions such as metal industry, construction, artisan activity, and professional employment (Daniele G2, Andrea G1, Mara G1, Ugo G3, Piero G3),

I learned from my older colleagues and bosses, from their experiences and now I am a reference point for the younger colleagues. (Daniele G2)

But sometimes “the younger” who do not want to respect the steps are called arrogant.

I cannot stand those people in their twenties who do not care, and who have before they can afford anything. (Daniele G2)

In most of the cases the hierarchies in skills and competencies are disrupted. This is true especially in the service sector, either public or private, where the introduction of technologies made most of the experienced worker obsolete, although still safe in their jobs. However, in the public sector and in very hierarchical private organisation such as banks, the principle of seniority still counts as for the money reward and career advancement (see focus group three, and Tina G3)

Another aspect of the asymmetry between young and old generation concerns the fact of the unequal distribution of social –welfare-state payments, and of stable jobs between young and old people, but we did not find evidence of open conflict between generation, none of our young interviewees or focus group participant showed to perceive or react against the uneven distribution of the duty of taxation and advantages of the redistribution. See Hypothesis 11 to 16, D2, about the non-evidence of a war of generations and the speechlessness between generations.

2.1.7 Relation between work and other spheres of life

Workload, time schedules, predictability, geographical mobility, but also *the level of responsiveness and autonomy*, are measures of the blurred boundaries between work and life, and appear as important elements in the relation to work.

Some of the young interviewees appreciate work to the degree that it does not invade too much of the rest of life, even when they do the job they have always wanted.

Computers have always been my passion, since I was a child. I wanted to find out what was inside (...). I have a stable job, I am lucky, it is quite rare, and I am happy because I do not need to travel for work and I do not need to make the effort to speak other languages. (Tommaso G1)

Some young people complain for long hours because it does not leave them time to do anything else (Alessandra G1, Andrea G1). Long hours are insufferable, especially when they are the result of bad planning or task definition. Alessandra, a young female engineer, contrasts the empty model of the consultancy—unnecessary long hours to impress the client, an inexperienced young manager, self-satisfied and aggressive colleagues—with the rather quiet and solid model of the bank.

I did not have a life, I could not go to the gym, I could not see any friends. We did not need to work for so long: people would stay there playing or chatting till 6 and to go on working till 10, every day. When I finished my work at 6 I could not leave because they made me feel guilty, they would say “did you take half day off today? (...) I really saw the difference between a communication company, full of rampant young people, and the world of bank, good and quiet, good and solid... Nobody can move them; they will be there for 50 years. Quiet. And then manager are much better here than there, they are more humane, more competent in human resource management, as they say. (Alessandra G1)

The ephemeral world of consultancy is contrasted as well to the solid model of the small family company of the north of Italy, where she now works for her father.

Long hours and unpredictability are not necessarily a feature of a free lance job, professional employment or consultancy, it can characterise part-time jobs in the great distribution, that address young students, in general people that are supposed to have fewer responsibilities outside work, and can be fully available for some days of the week. But it can also be a feature of those employment relations that mix regular and irregular work

I was hired for four hours in the morning, I ended up doing an average of 52 hours per week and I even manage to work 200 hours in one month, anyway a lot of hours making very little money, because I had a contract for 4 hours and for the rest it was under the table, so they could give me a forfeit they invented, and they paid me 3 euros per hour, the under-the-table hours. (Mara G1)

The preference for rigid separation between work and life is also important for adults who regard work as an imposed duty, something you have to do, and who therefore choose not to invest so much in work in order to avoid too many responsibilities, since responsibility implies letting work govern your life.

Recently I noticed that since I am more experienced than the last person who entered, I have become a reference point, I am not the last wheel of the carriage, both the clients and company consider me more, therefore although I try not to let work into my life, this pushes more and more... (Massimo G2).

It is important to underline that level of qualification and quality of the work are not a determinant of the positive attitude toward the intrusiveness of work into life. Mara is a beautician, she is very passionate about her job and she admits that she does not draw any

precise boundary between it and her life. When she gets home she receives more clients. She speaks about “her cross” when she refers to this habit of seeing clients who are friends at home, people who make her work distinct but whom at the same time she is not free to reject...

Guido has been working in construction since he was 16; he says he stole the profession (“*my profession, I stole it*”) referring to his eagerness to learn what the older masters in the construction field had to teach.

I would finish his part of the work as soon as I could to start doing something else and to learn as much as I could.

Guido started caring more about the boundaries between work and life when he decided to have a family:

In narratives of old people there is the theme of all the years spent without separating work from life. This situation is contrasted with retirement or a more general disinvestment from work. The disinvestment may have different reason as well: it can be the effect of having sufficient experience and expertise to do things in less time:

...especially at the beginning I used to work from morning to evening and often I would bring work home, or I brought some of my students home... I remember that time I brought some young people I was giving a course to, I brought them to my living room and we continued our lesson. It was crazy...In the past, when I was at home I would read, study, write, I was really hungry for these things, then when I learnt to digest them, I told myself there was much more to invent, so a smaller effort was sufficient to keep the flame alive. I do not know how long it will last: one day I will wake up in the morning and decide to stop working. I do not have to show anything to anybody. (Giampiero G3)

When one is young work is a lot. (Ugo G3)

2.1.8 Relation to work

Among old people it is more frequent to hear stories of satisfaction and relative success. Independently from the content of their job, the level of education, the family situation, interviewees tended to attribute positive meanings to work. In one case, however, there is a strong element of dissatisfaction and the feeling that she could have gained more, or asked for something different to work, in term of stability, time, recognition (Mina G3).

In some narratives, of both the young and old generation, the relation to work appears controversial; the meaning of work gets blurred. The protagonist of this narrative people may end up trapped in work they do not really want since it does not meet their values (Eleonora G1), or may evince attachment to values that are not really reflected in the work choices they have made (Marina G1, Mina G3, Tina G3). We found two strong cases of “cognitive dissonance” among young persons’ narratives (Marina [G1] and Eleonora [G1]) and cases that we might call of “moderate self-deception” in the old group (Tina [G3], Mina [G3], and Piero [G3]).

In general the idea of work as self-fulfilment, satisfaction, and power is frequent in the narratives of people in their 50s.

As for the young group, it is divided between those who have an unstable job they like, and those who have a stable job they do not like. In both cases they sound generally satisfied with

their situation, for they can either fulfil their passion, and use their skill, or enjoy stability and opportunity to disinvest from their job in terms of time and sense of responsibility. There are some cases of people who have, or had, both a job they like and work stability. In one case, that of Davide (G2), the person does two part time jobs in order to pursue both self-actualisation and stability.

In general, for all the age groups, we can distinguish stories of people who value their work because it is what they studied for (Tommaso, G1), or what they have always dreamt of (Mara G1, Silvia G1), or what they knew was in their destiny (Ugo, G3).

Work is valued as a duty but also as something that has the power to make people economically independent, to free them from the influence of the family. This meaning of work is relatively independent from its content and the level of qualification it requires. We find this aspect in Valentina (G3), a woman in her late fifties originally from the South who worked as a teacher, but also in Daniele (G2), the metal worker who regards her job as source of recognition.

Some interviewees refuse to see work as a constraint to other choices:

The first thing you look at is the economic aspect, the economic difficulties and work, but if you think that you do not live just for work, you live for continuing your species, for your family, to give a future, to give principles and values to your sons and daughters, then there is no doubt about which path to follow. (Barbara G2)

Work is not regarded any longer as a stable and safe foundation on which to build one's life. Hence the younger generation, in particular those in their thirties, lack any capacity of planning.

2.1.9 The gender dimension

Gender dimension is here considered as a crosscutting one, whom we find trace of in different elements of the relation to work we have explored above.

Passion appears as a key element in women.

I could never last long in work I have no passion for. (Alessandra)

Work should mean to make life better. (Alessandra G1).

Passion appears as a theme in male stories as well:

I started from the passion that has always driven me, since I was a child and that led me here, to my present work. I found out that it was not simply to play; it was to have the possibility of publishing texts, the school newspaper, I was curious to know what was inside. (Tommaso G1)

Some authors talk about “feminisation” of the model of relation to work, with reference both to the element of passion in work, that emerge from young male stories and while traditionally it qualify female ones, and to the loss of the centrality of work.

Money are important in women's stories not just as means to acquire other things, but as a measure of your values, as an objective sign of recognition and esteem.

At the end of the year they gave us some money... and this is as well sign of esteem. (Mara G1)

2.2 Emerging themes

In dealing with work among generations, the project focuses on some key issues that qualify the relation to work.

The first issue is the existence of **different dimensions of the relation to work**: i. *instrumental*, meaning material expectations, the importance of money and advancement in career; ii. *social*, the importance of interpersonal relations at work; iii. *symbolic*, it refers to the fulfilment of we can call higher level desires (self-actualisation, esteem) the desire to express oneself; to convey passion into work; the desires of success, autonomy, social usefulness (cf. State of the Art).

The second issues concerns the **relation between work and other life spheres**, on which the literature splits between authors who argue that work has a decreasing importance in the building of the identities, and authors who underline work remains a central values for people of different generation.

Our interviews show, first of all the centrality/non-centrality of work it is not specifically linked to the prevalence of one of the three dimensions or another: as shown by the interviews, people may look for self-actualisation in work and in other spheres of life at the same time, as do people who speak of passion when referring to work, or those who invest in and cultivate other interests outside work (Silvia G1, Tommaso G1)

2.2.1 List of the themes

- Work is the centre of life, (Piero G3, Luigi G2, Ugo G3).
- Work is competition for **success** (Piero G3, Barbara G2...)
- Work is **self-actualisation** (the desire to actualise skills and talents, values by means of work) (Eleonora G1, Elena G1, Valentina G3).
- Work is **passion** (Tommaso G1, Silvia G1, Guido 1, Davide G2)
- Work is a source of **esteem and satisfaction** (to have a positive image of oneself, to self-appraise oneself and to be appraised) (Andrea G1, Guido G1, Daniele G2, Mara G1, Valentina G3, Massimo G2)
- Work realises the need of **belonging**, of being part of a group (centrality of the relational aspect) (Andrea G1, Tommaso G1, Davide G2, Valentina G3, Eleonora G1)
- Work is to **solve problems** and to be effective (Giampiero G3, Alessandra G1, Elena G1)
- Work is a way to **put order in life** (Giampiero G3, Alessandra G1, Valentina G3)

- Work is very **important, but should not be a restraint** to other choices (Barbara G2, Mina G3, Tommaso G1, Silvia G1, Guido G1.)
- Work is **stability** (security is not necessary gained through money) (Eleonora G1, Silvia G1, Tommaso G1, Guido G1, Tina G3, Davide G2, Massimo G2,)
- Work is to be **economically independent** and to have power, **to gain autonomy**, not to be subjected to external pressures by parents, environments etc. (Eleonora G1, Andrea G1, Davide G2, Mickail G2, Valentina G3)
- Work is **just money**, and/or to climb the ladder. The bare “opportunistic” model, (Marina G1, Mina G3, Mickail G2)
- Work is a duty (Massimo G2, Valentina G3, Ugo G3, Mara G1)

The numbers do not refer to any hierarchy among the themes.

2.2.2 Description of the themes

Themes 1 and 2 recall the classical mail-breadwinner model, in that they express an idea of work as *the* fundamental sphere of life. Work is the centre and there is no substitute for fulfilment they get from work (Ugo, Luigi). As they get older they may perceive a sense of being marginal, and convey annoyance at the work scene now occupied by younger and competitive people (Piero)

In themes 3, 4 and 5 work although having a clear expressive meaning does not necessarily occupy the centre of life. Under these themes we find both people who view work as their chance to gain esteem and credibility after their failure as students (Andrea G1 and Daniele G1), and therefore put work at the centre of their identity; people who value passion in work, who need to recognise themselves in what they do (Tommaso G1), and who leave the job when it does not respect their broader ethical commitment (Silvia G1)

Theme 6 qualifies the stories of people who assign a high importance to relational dimension in the workplace. It is the theme of people who call themselves satisfied or dissatisfied with work often depending on the quality of their relationships with colleagues.

Theme 7 and 8 concern stories of those who call “good job” a job in which time and tasks are clearly defined, which help effectiveness; a job that is relatively predictable in its requirements. Here predictability does not imply low profile of the work tasks: the content of work may either be high or low, but it has to be clearly defined from the very beginning. In some of these interviews the relational dimension emerges as an element to be kept under control for it complicates the achievement of the tasks (Elena G1, Alessandra G1); in other stories work as a principle of order is contrasted with the swinging movement of the rest of life. (Elena G1; Barbara G2; Alessandra G1)

As for “Work is very **important, but should not be a restraint** to other choices”(9), people who share this theme usually are not so young, and they have family responsibility. During their life they experienced the choice of putting into bracket work to dedicate to children (Mina G3, Guido G1), to move back to their town of origin (Barbara G2), to risk quitting a stable job to start their own business (Claudio G3).

But we find this theme also in young people such as Tommaso and Silvia who try to balance jobs they are passionate of with other interest in life. This attitude is not an effect of the lack of interest in the work they have - so theme 9 is different from the theme 12, the opportunistic view of work. For example Barbara (G2) is very fond and proud of the ICT project she led, and Tommaso has always wanted to be an IT specialist, but he likes to have time his life outside work. Theme 9 seems to characterise people with stable jobs, or who have stability as an objective... “first come the family, I shaped my work so that it could fit my family need. Of course work is necessary if you want your family to live in a certain way” Guido (G1)

Theme 10, work is stability, does attributes a special values to work as a source of security, but does not regards money as the main ingredient of it. People sharing this theme sometimes have been asked for less money they deserved (Mara G1), they have chose not to work when this served the purpose of more important objectives in life.

In 11 and 12 are different, though they both recall money as the reason for working. In theme 11 there is a stronger symbolic component than in 12. People under theme 11 value the economic aspect as long as it allows them to acquire autonomy, to became in control of their life. Here money is not the aim of work. Differently in theme 12 money or career promotion are pursued for themselves, and people in presenting this themes might at the same time show dissatisfaction for their talents being downsized by the work they do, and appearing very proud of the position – both economic and hierarchical - they gain in their job (Marina G1). Mara (G3) tells that she never worked as a blue collar, even though she did not have a diploma, and that she always “had my ambition to arrive.” In theme 12 work is seen as a path to improve one social status by means of money and formal work position.

Theme 11 is closer to theme 5 than to theme 12, e.g Andrea G1, it might be a specification of theme 3 self – actualisation.

Theme 13 (“work is a duty”) is a residual theme that cuts across age groups. It is especially present in the old generation independently of level of education and family background, and weaklier in the middle generation, which was particularly evident in focus groups. We find this theme in the young generation only in presence of insecure subjects jobs requiring minimal qualification. Is is connected to the idea that **work is something unavoidable**, although it has some positive effect on life in term of money, self-fulfilment, and interpersonal relations.

2.3 Analysis of work between generations

Consistent with the project aim of gaining insight into the relationship of different generations toward work, and of helping to formulate recommendations to policy makers, it is important to understand how much of the relation to work is due to differences in *generation* and how much is due to differences in *age*; how important are the central variables generation and age, and how important intervening variables are such as gender, profession, family background. The following part of the analysis represents a first step in this direction, and proposes a reading of the results of narratives and focus groups that focuses on the element of *discontinuity* between generations, with particular attention to how much the discontinuity rests on generation and how much on age. By ‘generation’ we mean a specific age group considered in a specific socio-political context.

The divide between generations lies mainly in the following: a different balance between work and the other spheres of life; a change in the meaning of work; a change in family roles; new organisation of work; an increase in the precariousness of work contracts.

As for the notion that young people today are more irreverent, more aggressive, and less prone to obey to authority, these seem to be attributes assigned to young people by older ones regardless of generation. In comparing the generations' relation to work, both factual experience and attitudes, we consider the two extreme age groups in order to sharpen the comparison and because the middle group shared characteristics with both.

Even when it is a passion, work is one of the many passions young people have in their life. We may speak of a passage from verticality to horizontality with respect to the relation between work and other spheres of life. The investigation reveals that for people in their 50s (both men and women), self-actualisation rests principally on work. Work often occupies the top of the ranking scale of what counts in life, or of what has counted. This is also true for women who were entering the job market in the seventies: in their stories work as a source of income is the tool for emancipation, an exit from subjection.

Younger stories of work and life often sound different. They are organised along the horizontal axis and convey an idea of poliocentricity: life does not revolve around work, work is merely one of the ingredients—but not necessary the main one—of identity. Work is an important dimension but it is also important to put some checks on it in order not to have it invade the rest of life. The image of work as pressure and burden emerges in young people's stories, as opposed to the image of work as realisation, success, and source of esteem. In drawing this distinction we have to consider that in the stories of young people with a low level of education who come from less well-off (although often supportive) families and are employed in more practical jobs, work still has an important role as a source of identity and esteem. Silvia's words are particularly revealing on the discontinuity between the old and young model of work:

My father has been a model impossible to get closer to, of course anachronistic, he was the classical man of the fifties, dedicated to family, without respect for the house, his duty was to bring money home, the familiar structure was very hierarchical, everything was classic, absolutely precise... if I think that my brother was a CEO and, to put it briefly he decided to leave for New Zealand to work first in a hotel, then in a gym centre... This means that (the father's) model was completely out of his view, not desirable. Completely different from the concept of work of my father. The other brother has been unemployed I do not know for how long... His wife works for a pharmaceutical company, she takes enough to maintain the family, probably if my father was still alive he would not even talk to him, but it does not matter since it is the concept of work that is completely different now. (Silvia G1)

This change in the meaning attributed to work lies in structural as well as socio-political elements, elements that nevertheless may lead to different interpretations:

On the one hand, new organisations of work—flexibility in time and place of work, work by project, and the consequent increase in autonomy and responsibility of the subject in the management of her working time—offers the possibility of experiencing a better integration between work and the rest of life. As has often been noted, this gives women and men the chance to experiment with different ways of organising and sharing family responsibility and commitment. On the other hand, this new form of work organisation results in work invading other spheres of life, in the “blurring of boundaries between work and life” that can meet

resistance on the part of young men and women who say they do not want to be overcome by work and need time for themselves (Tommaso, Andrea, Alessandra, Silvia).

Some of the young people (Eleonora, Elisa, Silvia) saw increasing flexibility of work contracts as “the way to pay them less.” For others the passage to a more standard job signalled the renunciation of the kind of work for which they were trained or liked. The number of stable contracts appears to be shrinking. Particularly in the last five years, the use of non-standard work contracts has changed from being the first step in work life to being the only form of work available to young people. We interviewed people from the same organisation, with the same educational level, who entered in different periods, and found that the same corporation that 10 years ago would hire one as a non-standard worker only for a limited period, now offers only temporary jobs. As Elena (G1) tells us, her corporation’s employees are formally hired by a temporary worker provider such as Adecco or Manpower. Elena has a degree in economics and a contract as a temporary worker in human resources expert and recruiter.

A general feature of the narratives and focus groups, and relevant to all generational groups, is so-called *cognitive dissonance*. People cannot resist for long when there is a conflict between facts (what they do) and values (what they assign importance to). In the case of such conflict people either change their acts or change their motivating values. A classic example concerns people who smoke. A smoker would stop smoking if she/he really thought it bad; in order to allow herself to continue smoking she has to find some redeeming feature, some positive values in the act of smoking (it helps concentration, it enhances sociality, it is appealing). We noticed that most of the interviewees claim to be satisfied with their present job, relate quite good interpersonal relationships and good rewards. Complaints are usually expressed about jobs they left, or about work they would not want to do. There two cases, Marina (G1) and Eleonora (G1), of young people who complained of their work situation from most points of view—relationships, organisation, and content—except for the stability and money they gain. Both Marina and Eleonora say they want to quit, but the interviews revealed that they choose to act consistently with the values of stability and safety (in the case of Eleonora), and of secure income and the opportunity to gain power (in the case of Marina).

3. Concluding remarks

On the basis of the three parts our analysis has been articulated in, we identify some significant trends in the relation with work among generations. These emerging aspects are reported here in the form of short statements.

- Intergenerational conflict is not explicit, yet the social inequality between generations is real. Notwithstanding the asymmetry between young and old generation on the distribution of welfare state payments, and of stable jobs between young and old people, we did not find evidence of open conflict.
- Age is unspoken; it might be a taboo like sex.
- Only some of the project research questions are explained by generation, in other cases the differences are an age-effect. Considering the concurrent needs, and often opposing claims expressed by old and young people, we argue that some of this opposition rests just

on the co-presence of people of different ages, in different phases of their life who therefore express different needs.

- The centrality of work for self-fulfilment and definition of one's identity can be relatively independent from the initial qualification and the content of the job.
- Gender explains more than age the relation to work.
- Family background is relevant. To have supportive/unsupportive parents, their level of education and work status play an important role in shaping the attitude toward work, the expectations and meanings people attribute to it.
- Money does not only refer to an instrumental attitude towards work, but also has a symbolic value, as a measure of one's values, as an objective sign of recognition and esteem, as a sign of emancipation. This is especially the case in women's narratives.
- There is a strong linkage between work and moral issues, especially in young people. Young people do not appear as empty of values and just aimed at self-interest and fulfilment of consumerist desires, they manifest deep sense of justice, values interpersonal relations and look for coherence between work and life as far as values are concerned.
- The quality of relationships on the workplace can be an overriding aspect also compared to the content.
- The quest for meaningful jobs and not just stable job emerges especially from the young stories.
- Often insecurity is the condition that older generation attribute to young one: old people seem to fear insecurity more than young though they do not really experienced it.
- The trade - off between stability and content satisfaction is a recurrent feature: to look for stability often means to give in the ambition to do what you studied for, or what you like
- The period of stabilisation in the work world for young generation is extending, and it develops as a process "for trial and error" in which a number of new beginnings, detours, interruptions have substituted the one way of the linear work trajectory.
- The hierarchies and power between old and young generations are disrupted. There is a schooling and technology divide between old and young people. Competencies acquired by means of formalised education defeat experiences in general and especially as far as languages and ICT are concerned. Young people —those who know English and ICT— are perceived by older generations as stronger, more in control. Older generation seem to fears and envy this power.
- In young people even when it is a passion, work is one of the many passions young people have in their life: life does not revolve around work, work is merely one of the ingredients—but not necessary the main one—of identity (polycentricism in young generation attitude to work and life).
- Contamination occurs between man and female style and approaches to the relation to work. Some main features of this contamination of models of relation to work are: the

search for a different balance between work and the other spheres of life; changes in the centrality and meaning of work depending on the different life phases; discontinuity —as opposite to the linearity of the male-bread winner path— in the work trajectory.

It is important to underline that some of these trends were not included within the original framework of hypothesis of the project, they emerged from the research. Aspects such as gender as an overriding elements for explaining the relation to work; ages as taboo, an unspoken factor in the life stories; the symbolic meaning of money that integrate the instrumental one; the moral attitude of young generations as opposed to the cliché' that regards them as superficial and self-absorbed; the central role of family in shaping the attitude to work as well the secondary role of qualification to define the kind of relation to work, and the relevance work has in the shaping of persons identities. This aspect deserves further considerations and will be the starting point for the elaboration of public policy recommendations.

4. Summary of significant narratives

In the last part of the report we summaries and provide a brief analysis of 14 of the 25 narratives.

a) **1_Silvia, Woman, 29, theatre teacher, single mother of a two - year old son**

She comes from a family of six people and has two brothers and an older sister. The main episode of their family life is the death of the father, as a consequence of which the family moved from Milan to the suburbs. She tells of an instrumental relationship to work, because work is first and foremost a burden, something that has to be done in order to gain enough security for one self and one's family. She describes herself as lucky for having had the chance of keeping together her passion for the theatre and work.

She describes young generation in a very positive way, they are powerful and enthusiastic, they are the opposite of her own generation (people in their 30ties, who lack capacity for planning and projecting the future. She stressed the evolution in the way of perceiving work. From the old, traditional model, represented by her father - work as something “hierarchical, structured, precise, reliable” connected to the “duty of bringing money home” – to the idea of work as something that should make life better, more enjoyable (one brother who left an important job to move to New Zealand where he manage an hotel) or as a duty that has not necessary a male duty (the second brother gave up his work and now is at home while his wife makes enough money to provide to the family. Silvia seems to be try to balance between the two models, to have not decided yet which her idea of work is, and during her narrative she alternates moments of deep regret for the instability that characterises work nowadays, and she has been involved in, and her feeling like for having the opportunity of experimenting work as a passion and not as a duty.

b) **14_Elisa, 28, female, teacher of dance and theatre**

After a scientific diploma, she started a university of art, she is still attending. She worked for four years as theatre actress, but since she could not live on it, she started teaching in a private school. Her family was not supportive to her in her acting work: they want her to take a

degree and find a “normal” job. Work and money are important to understand what is your value, to be recognised and to enforce your self - esteem. She feels more at ease with people similar to her, who have her age and a similar work and family situation. She describe older people in the artistic field has people that often gave up their expectations Informal organisation. As a teacher she plans her own activities. She defines the larger environment a jungle: people try every way to gain some money; there is a blooming of associations and cooperative, and children represent a business.

c) 16_Tommaso, 26, male, software engineer

After graduation in computer science, he started following his passion. He loved computers since he was a child; he had always wanted to find out what was inside them. But contrary to most of his friends he owned a computer only late in life because his father did not understand how important it was for him. So when he entered university he was somehow behind his colleagues, he did not know the instrument properly. Passion for technology and research for stability are the main theme of his narration. After studying he entered his company by doing an internship for seven months. From his stories there does not emerge a particular importance of colleagues, unless they are older people from who he can learn. He his very grateful to his bosses, who enabled him to be part of a specialised team in which he learned the approach to software. The impression is that he feels part of a community that goes beyond his job, made by people who share a certain approach to technology, who understand its value and even its humour. The most important event for his future trajectory was a class in software engineering. Working with information technology and having a stable job are regarded as main goals of a work life and he feels very lucky for having them both. He also enjoys not having to travel for work and not been forced to learn languages other than those for computers.

d) 11_Guido, 29, male, middle level of education, works in construction, two children

He wanted to learn the job, he studied and completed the high schools, but he always wanted to work as the person who build (“I know how to do things and not just what to do: if they make a mistakes they cannot hid it to me”). After a first period of as apprentice, he started his own business in construction in house renewing, but he had problems with customers who did not want to pay him, so he in 2004 he decided to go back to being an employee to be less involve in the economic part of the work, “to have time and mind” to dedicate to his family. In 2004 he was planning to move with his wife and to have children. Work as security and quietness (“I found what I was looking for: a work full of satisfaction, responsibility, with few risks”), especially now that he has two children but he wish to try again having his own business afterward. His dream has always been to be a constructor (like his father...)

Work was a negative experience every time he mixed friendship with business. The problem was always money, and lack of correctness from his friends-bosses. He always supported his family, mother and the two sisters when his father left. He appears to feel very responsible for his both families, the original and the one he created. He suffered for his parents divorced and helped his mother with money after it. He works in construction industry like his father, he is proud of his father as a strong worker, but do not agree with his way of managing business and family. The relation with clients is too personal, and Guido fears to mix friendship with business. His father lost a lot of money playing cards, he lost mOney but he always recovered. “he restarted at least 6 times.” The older people are the “masters’, people who have

experience and know the work. It is a kind of work in which experience is the key element. They are usually suspicious at the beginning, because of his age, but he manage to prove that he has experience too, that he knows the job for he has being working for 11 years.

e) 15_Marina, 22, female, employee in a supermarket as sales promoter, single

She appears very similar to the colleagues on her fifties she is criticising: she is reproducing the model of work she is showing contempt for. She refers to it as “the model of the low level - worker with few hope to be able to find something better outside”; it is the model she criticises in her parents. She seems to exchange satisfaction and self-fulfilment for security, money and power. She values the stability of her work contract and she sounds very proud of her being the “ancient” worker, the person who can tell the younger what and how to do things. She describes her actual situation, now that she has a stable contract, as the opportunity to do just as much as it is needed, not having to be the factotum. Very instrumental relation to work, colleagues and bosses. She appears self-cantered but surprisingly she put her self in an unbearable “cognitive dissonance”. We wondered whether she really meant what she says about the work she would like to have. She strive for not being confused with the parents, who never desired to improve and to the colleagues who “barely speak Italian” as she keeps.

“Work is really bad”, she admit she missed the school, but the impression is that she actually made her choice: to climb the ladder and build a career where she is.

She complains for the unfairness of the work condition so much subjected to the boss and the time schedules, but in the end she seem to accuse the “simple employee”, her female colleague in particular, for not being capable to strive for something better.

f) 10_Eleonora, 26, female, technical employee in a mass electronic company, lives with her partner

She studied foreign languages at university, she would have liked to enter in a publishing group but then she happened to be hired by a famous mass electronic company three years ago. So, since “you have to start from somewhere” as she repeats during the interviews, she spent there three years, and she still works there. Now she appears trapped in this view of the work as something you have to do, so she feels frustrated because she is not doing what she studied for, she is not learning anything, she has bad relationship with her colleagues, but still she does not look for something different. This is her second work experience after the graduation, the second “marginal work”, as she says. Work is a totally negative experience, she feels she is wasting her time, she is disillusioned. Power as autonomy, power as decision are frequent words in Eleonora’s interview, and they are used to refer to what is missing, what she does not have in her job. In the end work is “not very interesting but it is useful to bring some money home.”

She starts her narrative describing her work as non - decisional, of little importance, not interesting and not consistent with what she studied for. But she adds it was useful to start from somewhere, while complaining for being wasting her time. Her picture of the relation with colleagues is as well negative, she is afraid of being rumoured and judged and she describes people as unkind and untruthful. The relation with the boss is equally bad: before she had a very understanding boss, now she has a boss who offends his employee and she

fears to be criticised in front of everybody, to become somebody “to make fun of”. Also in the previous job the relationship with the boss was very bad

She sounds divided between the sense of being considered less than she values, and the feeling that she is not good enough to claim for something more both in terms of consideration and typology of the contract and money. She is ambivalent in her representation of the work on the contractual point of view. On the one hand she says she cares foremost for the content, but then she admits that she might be able to get a more satisfied and remunerated job inside Samsung. She did not leave her job notwithstanding her boyfriend suggested her to try.

The parents are a negative model: they contributed to her sense of not being good enough to expect something more than economic security from work (“work is work” is the recurring sentence when she speaks). She is “taken in the middle” of two opposite models of work: one is the model of her parents, according to which work is first and foremost a duty to fulfil basic need. In this model work is contractual security, stability, a solid big company (the model of having a “good work”). The second model is what Eleonora tells she would like to conform to. An idea of work as satisfaction, result of what you studied for, acquisition of method and knowledge in doing things, something you can feel proud of, something you recognise yourself in (the model of having a “handsome work”). But in fact her work trajectory and present work life reflect the first, more instrumental model. Although she speaks of the aesthetic dimension of work, “work should be beautiful and not just good”, and she is dismissive of her present job, which is described as secure but dull.

g) 4_Daniele, 37, male, metal worker, he is divorced and has a 11 year-old daughter

He started working when he was very young (15 years old) because he was not very good at school, he worked in small mechanical firms and then he entered Siemens. His work schedule includes working at night, he says the thing was not too uncomfortable, but he thinks it is one of the reasons for his marriage problems.

He regards work as a source of self-esteem and not just a source of money. Work was his way to find his path in life, since he did not succeed in school. Work is a lens throughout he looks at himself and he expects people to judge him. Work is a learning environment, and older colleagues have always been for him models and sources of experience.

In his story this is the main difference he sees between the older and the younger generations: people in their twenties are not interested in learning and in obtaining things they deserve step by step, they are instrumental and impatient, “they have before they can afford anything”.

His story tells of his direct experience of the passage from the stable employment to the use of contingent workers in the metal sector. He experienced the lack of innovative energy and the lack of interest to invest in new machineries that would improve the quality of the job

h) 2_Luigi, 42, male, manager in an electronic corporation, two daughters

He started with his technical work immediately after the diploma (19 years old). After 2 years he started university and took a degree in political science, and he worked in the USA for three months. Once back he started working for the big electronic group. He comes from a supportive family and a rigid education; he refers particularly to the father as a model. The mother is described as the one who always takes care and who gives everything for her

children. Centrality of work, work as a challenge, enthusiasm, example. Work absorbs him completely and he has very little time for his family – wife and two daughters. He says to have better relationship with younger than with older people: he likes making young people grow.

i) 5_Barbara, 36, project manager, married, two daughters

Although she lives in Milano and her relatives live near Trento, she has a very strict relationship with them. She grew up with her uncle and aunt because her parents died when she was 15 years old. She studied architecture but she did not finish university and she started working in a real estate company, afterward she worked in Grundig and Samsung, where she made a good career path. In her career story her bosses have great importance, they thought her how to take responsibility for what she does, how to take decision and dealing with their effects. She values work, she considers it a source of self-esteem but she argues that she would never let work interfere with life choices.

She works with people of her age, in general she regards as important the exchange among generation and she finds being together with younger people a good way to “stay young”. But she is, as well, critical and severe when she talks about young people in their twenties: they are superficial, dull, they lack values, they are not engaged in their work, they do not respect older colleagues.

She seems to contrast the more dry and intellectual sphere of work - personal and economical satisfaction, intellectual stimulation - with the sphere of what really matters: values, family, feelings.

j) 12_Tina, 51, female, public administration employee, she lives with her partner

She started studying political science but never finished and after some years spent doing temporary jobs – because she thought that time for oneself was more important than having a stable job- she entered the public sector, working as a university employee. She never changed her job, although she moved among different offices at Univeristy of Milano.

She always tried to be creative even in a dry administrative job, and among the hierarchical constrains of the public administrations. She managed to create relationships of trust especially with students. Her story tells of better relationships with students than with colleagues. She had some serious difficulties and she suffered from harassment.

She experienced the tension between formalised knowledge and experience. People of her generation entered the job in the seventies without any specific qualifications and they “grew on the ground”, they built a solid experience and now they are “threatened” by younger people who have titles and reach decision-making positions as soon as they enter jobs.

k) 3_Giampiero, 64, male, technical consultant, married, one daughter.

He has a diploma as expert in electronics; he has always worked for companies dealing with machinery for radiology. At the beginning of his work history he was a simple technician, then he started responsibility as a trainer, both for his colleagues and doctors, and supervisor

of other colleagues. He describes his tendency to let himself be absorbed by work, also because he does only the jobs he likes.

He never changed his work field, but he moved from Milano to Naples, from North to South of Italy and then back. Giampiero is full of enthusiasm in talking about his work life, especially the last years as a “teacher”. He likes to be a teacher, to be somebody colleagues refer to in order to have suggestions and help. He has always appreciated the model represented by older and more expert people, such as his father, from whom he inherited a careful attention to details.

On this matter of the respect for the older and the expert, Giampiero criticises younger generations, especially their aggressiveness. But this aggressiveness seems as well partly due to the general change in working model:

Yesterday work was for the life, now you have to accept what you find; now jobs are unstable,

Work appears to be the place for experimenting, not just your value as a technician, but to have cooperative relationships with colleagues, to exchange knowledge and experience. Work is also an occasion to move from one part of the country to another and discovering that notwithstanding different work cultures, it is possible to live well in the south of Italy and to find it difficult to go back to Milano.

l) 13_Piero, 64, male, engineer, consultant, married, one daughter

He graduated and started his career as an engineer, he also taught and was the major of his town for over 10 years. He regards work as his source of satisfaction: recognition and power are his leading themes. Son of a simple worker, he tells his father has always been very proud of his success as engineer. The impression is that he cannot tell to be as well satisfied of his daughter. He barely speaks of her during the interview and the reference his to the humanistic diploma she took and to the relatively evanescence of her working choices. From his interviews emerges a tense relationship with younger generations; they are depicted either as inconclusive or lacking of leading capacity, or as aggressive. In general the young are regarded as are more appearance than substance.

m) 25_Ugo, 54, male medium education, free lance worker

Work is central for self-realisation, it was a natural (or obliged) path: he inherited his father work; they worked together for 17 years. Young people are more powerful, they are more secure and in control because they enter having a good formal education, they have very good competencies. Old people are his peers, those he can understand at the first sight, but sometime they sound less interesting, they are slower and they are less focused than young people. Though he find easier to work with people of his age, he would like to find an apprentice, somebody who could continue with his office one day. He had a very positive experience with a young women, they worked together for some years but then she left because she was interested in a branch of the activity his office was not specialised in (“she expanded what she learnt here with me” and applied it to something different) He speaks of the trade off between seniority - maturity and experience - and the advantages provided by the formalised adeducation: when he entered the work he lacked the competencies that would have made him more in control, while now he experiences the more powerful attitude of young people who enter the profession having the “titles.”

n) 18_Valentina, 57, high school teacher, married, two children

She left Salerno when she was 23, in 1973 because the quicker possibility to have a stable job as a teacher was to move to “High Italy.” Valentina values her work as a mean for self-actualisation and economic independency and she underlines that she never sacrificed work for life. From her story work is an experience of emancipation, of choice and liberty. Work was also a mean to meet broader political issues: in the North of Italy the experience of the ‘68 and the years of terrorism was more marked than in the South. She exited a comfortable but hyper-protective family environment and she had 5 year of complete liberty before being absorbed in the new family responsibility. She is now retired, she have been working for 25 years in the same school.

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Chapter 7: Report from Portugal

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1. Methodological considerations

1.1 Narrative interviews

1.1.1 Selection of the informants and overview of the interviews

In this study, informants were selected according to a snowball method. From each one it was asked to provide one or two contacts of people who could be interested in participating in this research. The total sample was completed with 25 informants, distributed by distinct private and public sectors of activity. Summary of interviewees is presented in the following table.

Summary of Interviews

Nº	Age Group	Sex	Educa-tion	Profession	Sector	Family	Chil-dren
1	G2 (40)	W	High	Human Resources	Private - Bank	Married	0
2	G2 (30)	M	High	Director of IT Department	Private – Services Logistics/Transports	Married	0
3	G2 (40)	M	High	Coordinator IT Projects	Private - Bank	Single	0
4	G1 (26)	W	High	Social Psychologist	Public - Health	Married	0
5	G3 (59)	W	Low	Secretary	Private - Services Transports/Logistics	Divorced	1
6	G3 (53)	M	Low	Manager	Private - Services Transports/Logistics	Married	2
7	G2 (37)	M	High	Product manager	Private –IT	Married	2
8	G3 (53)	W	Low	Administrative	Public - Transports	Married	4
9	G2 (33)	W	High	Probationer – Market Division	Public – Transports	Married	0
10	G2 (45)	M	High	Teacher (University)	Public - Education	Married	1
11	G2 (32)	W	High	Clinical Psychologist	Public - Health	Single	0
12	G3 (58)	W	High	Director Administr. Services	Public – Health	Divorced	2
13	G2 (34)	W	Mid	Clerk	Private – Services Food Industry	Married	1

14	G2 (45)	W	High	Teacher	Public - Education	Married	2
15	G2 (31)	W	Mid	Clerk	Private – Services Food Industry	Married	1
16	G2 (31)	W	High	Treasurer	Public - Education	Divorced	1
17	G1 (27)	M	High	Consultant	Private – Services Consulting	Single	0
18	G1 (24)	W	Mid	Shop Manager	Private – Services Clothing Industry	Married	0
19	G2 (43)	M	Low	Administrative	Private - Services Insurances	Married	1
20	G2 (40)	W	Low	Secretary of Board	Private – Services Textile Industry	Married	1
21	G1 (26)	M	Mid	External Services	Private – Services Transports/Logistic	Single	0
22	G1 (25)	W	High	Publicist	Private – Services Publicity	Single	0
23	G3 (63)	M	Mid	General Director	Private – Political Federation	Married	2
24	G3 (55)	M	High	Head of Trade Union	Private - Bank	Divorced	2
25	G2 (44)	W	Mid	Saleswoman	Private – Pharmaceutical Ind.	Married	2

Summary by Sectors

Sectors	Private	Public
	17	8
Total	25	

Summary by Family and Level of Education

	Family				Level of Education			Total
	Men No Child.	Men Children	Women No Child.	Women Child.	Low	Mid	High	
< 30	2	0	3	0	0	2	3	5
30 - 50	2	3	3	6	2	3	9	14
> 50	0	3	0	3	3	1	2	6
Total	4	6	6	9	5	6	14	25

1.1.2 Methodological design

All 25 interviews conducted were narrative-episodic interviews. This is a method, which is sensitive both to the general frame and the concrete situational contexts related to the patterns of relation with work and intergenerational relationships. At the theoretical level is associated to the assumption of the narrative structure of knowledge and experience (Bruner, 1987; Ricoeur, 1984; Sarbin, 1986). It is necessary to distinguish between episodic and semantic knowledge: the former is linked to knowledge associated to concrete circumstances (people, space, time, situations) while the latter is more abstract and generalised, being de-contextualised from specific situations and events (Flick, 2000). In order to achieve both forms of knowledge in our interviews, we combined invitations for the narration of concrete events (relevant to topics under study) with more general questions (such as definitions and argumentations).

1.1.3 Method for the analysis

For analysing interview transcripts, as well as other material resulting from linguistic interactions, some main aspects need to be considered:

a) Content, relation and function.

All discursive material resulting from inter-individual interactions contains at least three dimensions one must attend to (Habermas, 1978; Castro & Gomes, 2005; Potter, 1996):

- it has a content that refers to things in the world,
- it informs about the relationship that is happening between the individuals interacting,
- and it performs several inter-individual and social functions, like achieving a positive self-presentation or defending a certain worldview.

This implies that, when we analyse discursive material, we do not have direct and unmediated access to “what people are”, but to what in the context of a specific relationship, and with their self-presentation goals in mind, they say to us that they are. In turn, this means that when analysing the material, one cannot take all that is being said just by its “face value”, but should always seek to keep in mind that more than inferring individual characteristics we should examine the material searching for repetitive patterns that cut across individuals.

b) Re-production and transformation

In our societies there is plurality of understandings of the world and forms of organisation of thought and discourse and a variety of views linked to a plurality of groups (Moscovici, 1976, Jovchelovitch, 2007). This implies we need to consider that communication both reproduces and transforms the received knowledge. Individual appropriation of social categories and social knowledge both reiterates and re-produces what existed before, while at the same time it introduces some differences, and opens space for novelty and innovation.

This means that, when we are examining communication and discourse, we need to pay attention to how these reflect the interiorisation of the meaning categories by the individual and, at the same time, how the individual transforms these categories. At the operative level

this has one clear consequence: we need to perform two types of analyses: theory-driven, or top-down analyses; and data-driven, or bottom-up analysis.

We did then proceed in two ways for our analyses of the fully transcribed material:

1) A data-driven way – the full transcripts of the interviews were inspected searching for:

- Repetitive patterns occurring both within and across interviews; this reading was intended to allow for criteria for the construction of profiles to emerge from the analysis.
- This grounded approach was also a way of trying to explore what was the main meaning each person was attaching to work, i.e., how each individual person would hypothetically finish the sentence “I see work as...”. We called this the analyses of the “salient theme”.

2) Using a top-down strategy – we complemented the first strategy with a further reading of the material that intended to see

- how it could be organised around the theoretical previous distinction between expressive and instrumental relationships to work,
- Some structural and rhetorical features were also focused: for analysing narrative-episodic interviews, a notion of how the person structures her narrative in terms of development in time also needs to be achieved. In this way, we examined what were the narrative structures employed by the informants for describing their educational, family and professional trajectories and summarised the structures used according to three categories: Progressive, regressive or cyclic (following Gergen & Gergen, 1984).

We also examined co-occurrences of themes (generic issues under discussion) and topics (narrower than the theme, the topic indicates what a person is referring to (Van Dijk, 1998).

For achieving the final analysis, we worked in several steps:

1. an individual reading of all interviews by two people always.
2. dual discussions for all interviews after individual reading.
3. four people discussions for 6 of the interviews - collective interpretation leading to a common agreement after debate between the analysts.
4. a cross-interview reading looking for salient themes on the following selected topics.

Method for content analysis

Content analysis was performed with the meanings that interviewees associated to work and intergenerational relationships in their answers to our two first questions. These questions consisted in asking them to free associate (say the first thing that would come to their minds) to two stimuli sequentially offered: work and intergenerational relationships. Following Van Dijk (1998), distinction between themes and topics, the analyses identified the main topics related to both themes under study.

1.2 Group discussions

In the narrative interviews the question of intergenerational relations was always raised, but in several cases it was given secondary importance, and so a closer look at this issue was needed. Moreover, entering into the complexity of relational issues such as this one requires having multiple views elicited in a debate situation. As a consequence, the group interviews focus exclusively on relational issues between generations.

1.2.1 Selection of the informers and groups overview

Two group discussions with mixed age groups (12 individuals) were conducted: each group required about two hours of discussion. The constitution of the groups proved difficult. It was easier recruiting within organisations, but a group with several same-organisation individuals proved – in our perspective – to be less open in their discussions, and the members seemed constrained by the presence of the colleagues from the same place. The group with individuals from different organisations, which were totally unrelated and previously unknown to each other yielded more interesting and varied material. Gender was always considered in the selection, and both groups had men and women.

1.2.2 Methodological design

A focus group is like a thinking society in miniature (Bauer & Jovchelovitch, 2002), where the debate, when one can find different and even polarised positions, can illustrate most of the processes that characterise societal tensions. Contrasted positions and divergences and their rhetorical framing and negotiation show how the debate ...

Discussion groups were conducted according to a questioning route focused on the topic of intergenerational relationships at work. This instrument was developed considering the guide lines presented in the Focus Group Kit 3 (Krueger, 1998). The structure of the questions to the group was organised around **5 categories: opening questions** – focusing on the presentation of participants; **introductory questions** – which introduced the general topic of conversation, intergenerational relationships at work, and asked participants to remember important experiences related to it; **transition questions** – which presented the opportunity of moving more directly towards the central aspects of discussion; **key questions** – focusing the central questions of intergenerational relationships in a more reasoned way, and allowing for debate to occur among participants; at this stage we introduced some phrases collected from the narrative interviews and referring to intergenerational relations, for participants to comment; **final questions** - permitted to bring closure to discussion; asked which were the critical areas the participants considered more important regarding the topics discussed during the group session and asked whether there were other topics they wished to approach.

2. Patterns of relation to work: analyses of types

2.1 Introduction

The textual material originating in interviews and discussion groups can be approached by means of two main types of strategies: one strategy implies initiating the analyses from some theoretical point of view. Departing from it, a pre-defined set of categories is constructed and

the material is then inspected to see how well it fits with the theoretically defined structure of meaning categories. A second strategy implies allowing the analytic categories to emerge from the material, after a set of readings and re-readings – this is an approach grounded in the material, usually known as grounded analyses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and can also be called a bottom-up approach. We combined both approaches for approaching the interview transcripts.

A data-driven approach

In a data-driven approach to the interviews, we found some main organisers around which individual profiles could be positioned.

The first and main organiser is the notion of “career”. Career is not the same as work or as job, as it is a notion, which incorporates the dimensions of personal choice and self-direction, as well as the dimension of projection to a future. In other words, this notion incorporates the ideas of individual transformation and betterment as well as the idea of progress. At the organisational level, the notion of *Career* also directs our attention to how organisations structure the career progress of their members. In our times, the notion of “career development” seems to be more central than the notion of career, therefore further accentuating the dimension of “looking at the future” (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Career development is seen as decision-making, or as a lifelong process of getting ready to choose, choosing and continuing to make choices from among the occupations available in our society (Brown & Brooks, 1990). According to Patton and McMahon (2006) we are in a time when it is suggested to individuals that they should play a greater role in constructing their own career development, an era when careers are not forged for ever, and not static. These authors describe the current situations as follows: “Younger workers are encouraged to act as free agents, developing personal enterprises and marketing personal skills. Individuals increasingly need to focus on employability rather than job security, and learn the skills which will assist them in taking responsibility for the direction and evolution of their own careers.”

This was the central dimension that emerged from our analyses, and which organises, through two very different logics, our first two Types.

The second dimension was the *Relational* one. The importance of relationships and of their quality at work also emerged as important in some interviews. A third dimension has to do with working for *Causes*. The following tables summarise the types, which are further described afterwards.

2.2 Overview of the individual profiles and first presentation of the typology

Type	Sub-type		Interviewees
Type 1 <i>I have career plans for the sector where I work</i>	Sub-type 1.1: <i>beginning with the right foot</i>	Profile 1	Woman, 25 years old, higher education, single, lives alone, no children, working in marketing and publicity (private sector).
		Profile 2	Woman, 26 years old, higher education, social psychologist working in the public sector of health, engaged, no children
		Profile 3	Woman, 24 years old, mid education, sub-manager in a clothing shop, married, no children
		Profile 4	Woman, 33 years old, higher education, married and pregnant of her first child, probationer in a market division of the public sector (transports).
	Summary - the first example accentuates the efforts for adjustment in a competitive profession of a young person, through self-improvement and high investment in work. The second show the importance a young person gives to formal continued learning (PhD) and the will for flexibility in functions. The third shows the will to have a career, of projecting a future, of a less qualified young person. The third show how a cyclic trajectory can nevertheless end up in progression.		
	Sub-type 1.2: <i>Consolidating a career</i>	Profile 1	Man, 30 years old, higher education, IT Director in a private company of logistics and transports, married, no children.
		Profile 2	Man, 40 years old, higher education, Coordinator of IT Projects in a bank, single, no child.
		Profile 3	Man, 37 years old, higher education, married, 1 daughter and 1 son. Working as product manager in the private sector – technological industry.
		Profile 4	Woman, 31 years old, higher education, Treasurer in public education sector, divorced, 1 son
	Summary - All four profiles stress the importance of envisaging the future and preparing plans for it. The first 3 show this pattern within progressive, regular, trajectories, with continuous investment in continuous learning, and the 4 th within a cyclic trajectory, which was put back in track” by further investment in learning.		
	Sub-type 1.3: <i>approaching the end of a career</i>	Profile 1	Woman, in her late fifties, higher education, divorced, 2 sons. Director of administrative services in the public sector of health, approaching retirement.
		Profile 2	Woman, in her late fifties, lower education, administrative in a private company of logistics and transports, divorced, one daughter.
	Summary: the first profile exemplifies the dilemmas and anguish of approaching retirement from a well succeeded and much invested career. The second profile exemplifies the relief of approaching retirement. It is less representative of the career dilemmas, but provides a contrasting pattern of relation to anticipated retirement.		
	Sub-type 1.4: <i>a second choice career</i>	Peripheral element	Man in his fifties, low education, second marriage, 2 sons, manager in a private company of logistics and transports.
	Sub-type 1.5: <i>I want a career more than a job...</i>	Extreme case	Man, 27 years old, higher education, single and still living with parents. Working in the private sector – consulting services.

Type 2 <i>My job is not my career</i>	Sub-type 2.1: <i>but I have a concrete plan for the future</i>	Profile 1	Man in his forties, higher education, married, 1 child, working in polytechnic institute, finishing a PhD
		Profile 2	Woman, in her forties, higher education, married, no children. Works in a bank as human resources technician and is currently finishing a PhD.
	Sub-type 2.2: <i>and I have a vague plan for the future</i>	Profile 1	Man, in his twenties, mid education, single, no children. Working in external services at a company of transports and logistics.
		Profile 1	Man, 43 years old, lower education, married, one daughter. He has an administrative function in the private sector in the field of Insurances.
	Sub-type 2.3: <i>and I have no plans for the future, only an occupation that I need</i>	Profile 2	Woman, 34 years old, mid education, clerk working in a private company of food industry and services, married, one child
		Profile 3	Woman, 32 years old, higher education, clinical psychologist working in the public sector (Health), single, living with parents.
		Profile 4	Woman, 31 years old, mid education, working as clerk in a company of food industry and services, married, one child.

Type 3 <i>I like what I do and personal relationships are central</i>	Profile 1.	Woman, in her forties, mid education, married, two children. Working as commercial in a pharmaceutical company.
	Profile 2	Woman, 40 years old, lower education, married, 1 daughter. Working as secretary in textile industry
	Profile 3	Woman in her fifties, low education, married, 4 children, working as chief administrative in the public sector of transports
	Profile 4	Woman, in her forties, higher education, teacher in secondary school, married, 2 daughters.

Type 4 <i>Working for a cause</i>	Profile 1	Man, in his fifties, higher education, divorced twice, two sons from first marriage, has a stable relationship, head of a trade union in a bank
	Profile 2	Man, 63 years old, mid education, general director of a political delegation, married, two children

The following section presents a more detailed overview of the interviews grouped by profile, and illustrated with extracts of some relevant dimensions.

2.3 Typology and individual profiles

2.3.1 Type 1: I have career plans for the sector where I work

The profiles grouped in this first type have an emphasis on career development. The first group focuses on the beginning of a career, the second on the consolidation of a career and the third on the end of a career.

Sub-type 1.1: I have career plans for the sector where I work: beginning with the right foot

- **Profile 1.** Woman, 25 years old, higher education, single, lives alone, no children, working in marketing and publicity (private sector).

a) Education and work – Narrative type: Progressive

She had a progressive trajectory from kindergarten to university and considers that it was very easy to succeed in school. She completed a degree in social psychology and decided for an academic stage in the field of marketing studies. She enjoyed the field and decided to apply for a position at a well-known agency, where she was admitted for a professional trial period and where she was afterwards invited to stay. She has been working there for about 2 years and feels she is progressing professionally.

b) Family – Narrative type: Cyclic

During adolescence she had some conflicts with her mother, but around her twenties relationship became better. Some months ago she moved to her own house and this was important to improve her family relations.

c) Work

Work is related to self-fulfilment, challenge, effort, excitement, professional development. Work led to a higher level of resilience to the critics of others. Self is highly engaged for perfection at the level of performance and looks for superior recognition. Peripheral elements are relational, since personal relationships (friendships) are an important part of the professional context.

That's when I thought "this is really difficult", because they are very demanding, and nothing is ever perfect. And "just about good" is not enough, even sometimes, the best you can give is not enough, that was the first time I ever felt that,) in the beginning I felt like I was on the eve of an exam the whole time, even during the trial period. And even now, I still feel... I can be there the whole night, working, and still feel that it is not good enough and that... I had never felt that until I began working here.

d) Work versus Career

Professional life is related to a career project based on personal effort and recognition of hierarchical superiors. There are wishes to progress in the company, according to the improvement of personal competencies and expertise.

I don't know how many books I read and I learned also from experience. And I gained autonomy along the way, because in the beginning I could not... (...) Nothing I did could go ahead without going through my chief, I was very dependent on her, had to discuss everything with her. But as she saw I was becoming very autonomous, now there are projects for which I am the sole responsible. And that was an evolution. And there is also the evolution of gaining the respect, of people knowing that your contribution is good, that they should listen to you, and that, I was also able to conquer. I think I conquered a place, I do not know yet if it is the place I want, but I already have my own space (...) But I

want better, I want to perfect, I am not quite there yet. (...) Besides, there's great rotativity, and our space has to be permanently claimed, it is not warranted, and everyday we have to prove our place.

e) Work versus Family

Professional life had a strong impact in private life. Left parents house to be closest to her place of work, doesn't have time for friends or leisure activities. Relationship with boyfriend finished due to her professional obligations. Plans of motherhood have to be delayed since her job does not allow children in the near future.

- **Profile 2.** Woman, 26 years old, higher education, social psychologist working in the public sector of health, engaged, no children.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

She completed a degree on psychology and is currently doing a PhD while working. She developed an academic stage at the place where she presently works – General Direction of Ministry of Health. After completing the stage, she was for a while involved in other public research projects, but returned to that institution because a working contract became possible (through previous professional relationships).

b) Family - Narrative Type: Progressive

She lived with her parents in the interior south of Portugal until the end of secondary school. Since her older sister was already studying in Lisbon, she joined her for university studies, because she felt there were more job opportunities in a big city. They lived together until her twenties, but then her sister moved to London for professional reasons. She stayed in Lisbon with her boyfriend and afterwards they started to live together. Recently they bought a house and moved officially together. Although living in Lisbon she maintains close bonds with her parents.

c) Work

Central elements are relational and expressive – work is a source of fulfilment, through the recognition that the superiors have from self's competency; positive professional relations and organisational climate are fundamental for self-development and integration. Professional relations were responsible for important personal changes (way of dressing, talking).

d) Work versus Career

Work is conceptualised in terms of investment for the future - developing a career in the field of Health. Her professional occupations were always in this sector. She is developing a PhD project as a way of acquiring further qualifications and building a career in the field.

I signed the contract (for present position) when I was starting the 2nd year of my PhD, and then it was an option, I decided to work there and to continue also with the studies, and it has been complicated...

She wants to stay in the health sector, but is willing to change work place.

I was hoping that the work here would be more... more flexible in terms of area. Although I am a social psychologist, I think I can work in epidemiology, I can do rates, and all that stuff, but well, people have a big need to keep at the little spaces... no one tells anything to anyone.

e) Work versus Family

Work and family are not in conflict because her boyfriend is also in a period of high professional involvement. She works many hours and does not have energy for anything else at the end of the day.

- **Profile 3.** Woman, 24 years old, mid education, sub-manager in a clothing shop, married, no children

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Progressive trajectory until secondary school; a regressive period starts in 12th grade with negative results in two disciplines. Started to work in at a cloths shop and progressed – started as a saleswoman and is now the sub-manager.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Progressive

Only child with traditional family trajectory; always lived with parents, although she spent most time with grandparents when she was young (parents were working). Has a boyfriend since her adolescence, moved to their own apartment for about one year.

c) Work

Central elements of work are related to expressive functions for self – development, performance, satisfaction, self-fulfilment. Performance is related to the improvement of personal skills (adapting and learning with different situations). Peripheral elements are also associated to monetary income, which is necessary for private life.

d) Work versus Career

Work is conceived in terms of progression in career; started her job as sales woman and was promoted to sub-manager for her professional development. Wishes to learn more skills required at her field of work in order to reach a management position.

e) Work versus Family

Relations between family and work are not an issue. Sometimes self tends to discharge her stress at home but it's not problematic or conflictive. On the other hand personal growing at work had a positive impact in private relations (self reached an higher level of decentring).

- **Profile 4.** Woman, 33 years old, higher education, married and pregnant of her first child, probationer in a market division of the public sector (transports).

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Progression until 9th grade, a school year with negative results. Progressed again until 12th grade, but was not able to enter public university. She started some professional formation. Then she began to work as administrative and went to a private university, where she did a bachelor's degree. Changed to the present job, where career progression is possible, and completed university degree. Presently she's doing a preparatory stage for a new position in the organisation.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Progressive

Traditional progressive trajectory at the level of family; lived with parents and sister until she got married. At the moment she's expecting a baby. Does not mention any kind of negative aspects related with family.

c) Work

Central elements focus security and stability, which are derived from having a job. Employment prevents situations of forced emigration – a reality present in her family. Peripheral elements have expressive implications to self, since work is a source of learning and improving. The nature of the job is also associated an increasing of self's sociability.

d) Work versus Career

Self is oriented for the development of career within public administration, mainly in the market domain of public transports. Left previous job, which was satisfying, because there were no opportunities form progression. Developing a career also means socio-economic progression.

e) Work versus Family

Until now, family and work are separated spheres. Negative influences are not noticed, because she has no children. This family situation allows for increased availability and involvement in profession.

Sub-type 1.2: I have career plans for the sector where I work: consolidating a career

- **Profile 1.** Man, 30 years old, higher education, IT Director in a private company of logistics and transports, married, no children.

a) Education and work – Narrative type: Progressive

He started a degree in mechanical engineering, although it has not his first choice. While still studying he had through personal contacts (family), an opportunity for starting his professional life in a field he enjoyed (IT) and left university. After seven years he progressed in his career and actually is responsible for the IT department of the company.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Cyclic

His parents divorced when he was 6. He depicts a negative period with his father during adolescence, when conflicts were very frequent. He lived with his mother, stepfather and two younger siblings until the age of 22, and then left to live with his father, as a result of conflicts with his mother. Two years latter he moved to his own apartment, and lived alone for 5 years - afterwards his girlfriend moved in with him.

c) Work

Central elements are associated to economical stability at the level of private life. Peripheral elements have expressive functions to self, specifically, personal appreciation which comes out of professional occupation.

d) Work versus Career

Work is considered within a plan of career; started as network administrator, invested at the level of technical specialisation in order to progress in his career. Professional efficacy was important for achieving his actual position of IT director.

e) Work versus Family

Relations between work and family are not conflictive. Consider that family education had a positive influence in his professional life.

- **Profile 2.** Man, 40 years old, higher education, Coordinator of IT Projects in a bank, single, no child.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

He describes a progressive trajectory until University, where he completed a degree and a master in Economics. He started professional through personal relationships (university teacher). After a period at that company, he changed to his actual job at a bank, in the field of IT projects, where he is developing a progressive career.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Stability

Older son, one sister, single: stable family trajectory, lived with parents and sister until the age of 27/28, when he moved to his own home. Lives alone since then, but maintains a close relationship with his family.

c) Work

Work is a source of personal realisation and satisfaction. Diversity at the level of professional experience and competencies are essential to self's professional development. Peripheral elements are mainly relational, associated to positive and helping relationships between members of his team.

d) Work versus Career

Work is envisaged in a plan of career; in the bank his professional progression is related to IT field, with the development/management of new projects.

e) Work versus Family

In the present, professional life and private sphere are not in conflict. In the past, he had to dedicate many extra hours to his work and this was negative since he didn't had time for his private life.

- **Profile 3.** Man, 37 years old, higher education, married with 1 daughter and 1 son. Working as product manager in the private sector – technological industry.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

Progressive trajectory until university, always studied in the same military educational institution. Completed a bachelor degree in engineering and began professional life a few months before finishing academic education, through personal contacts (university professor who recommended him for a position). Remained in the same organisation but this company was integrated in a remarked multinational. Through the years developed a progressive career and currently his position is manager of IT products.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Progressive

He lived with parents and sister until he decided to move to his own house (after finishing his studies and started to work). Although he had a girlfriend he first lived alone and after when she moved in with him. After one year they decided to get pregnant, had a daughter and four years latter their second child, this time one boy. They never got married and at the moment he feels happy with his family.

c) Work

Central elements of self's relations to work are pleasure and constant evolution. Earning money is also an important element is self's relation to work. Education and specialisation in technological devices are two central tenets related to performance and career progression.

I think I had a positive professional evolution, and the fact that I was invited to work by a professor is nice, for me it shows that my university time had positive outcomes, I was recognised, a professor which had a company had recognised my work, and he wanted me to work in the real market. And the fact that I work with high tech equipment allowed me to maintain a constant evolution, they are in constant evolution, I have been having constant formation abroad, at the mother companies of those who produce the technologies, and it has been a good thing for me.

d) Work versus Career

Success in career is the dominant element. Work is defined in terms of improvement in performance and in a career project. Personal competencies and constant specialisation on IT products are seen as a path to sure progression. Recognition of significant others (professor from university) was an important motivation at the beginning of career.

e) Work versus Family

Work is the central element and these two spheres are not seen as problematic. Had a few episodes of conflict related to his children but doesn't attribute significant meaning to it. He considers that he was able to compensate the children after. His wife can assure family back up.

Peripheral element of the sub-type

- **Profile 4.** Woman, 31 years old, higher education, Treasurer in public education sector, divorced, 1 son.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Progression until university; then, marriage and pregnancy were an obstacle for continuing academic studies. Some years later she decided to resume work life, changed to the field of human resources and completed a degree. Working as administrative in the public sector of education during her studies, applied to other public institutions after completing degree, to achieve a better career. Invited to work in Lisbon, she still lives in a distant interior city, where the chances for career progression were lower.

b) Family

Narrative Type: Cyclic

He lived with her parents until the beginning of her twenties, married and got pregnant. This relationship was negative since the beginning because her husband worked by shifts, was studying at the school of police, so they hardly could see each other. Two years later she divorced and lives with her son ever since.

a) Work

Central elements are related to psychological and physical effort; work is associated to performance and positive achievement, and satisfaction, which derive from the appreciation that others (superiors and students) show for her professional performance.

b) Work versus Career

Work is related to career development. With investment in a new academic field applied to other public organisations with opportunities for progression. Investment in career implied having a job in a distant place from home.

c) Work versus Family

Work and family are not in conflict. The only interference is lack of time for family during weekdays, which is not seen as problematic – weekends are totally dedicated to family and friends. It always has been like this.

Sub-type 1.3: I have career plans for the sector where I work: approaching the end of a career

- **Profile 1.** Woman, in late her fifties, higher education, divorced, 2 sons. Working as director of administrative services in the public sector of health, is approaching retirement.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

Progressive trajectory until university. Completed secondary school in Angola, moved to Lisbon for first degree in Social and Political Sciences, continued her studies with several post-graduations in the field of Human Resources. At the professional level has an ascending trajectory on public administration for about 37. She is at the top of her career.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Regular trajectory, lived in Angola, married and had two male children. Divorced due to her professional investment, had a new partner with seventeen years but this relationship ended again for professional interferences.

But in fact I gave work so much of myself that I would always arrive home very late, and then one day, when I looked the person with whom I was had gone away with his secretary.

At present she feels happy at level of family life, with her sons and grandchildren.

My sons are very proud of me, they love me, apart from the fact that they are my children, they admire my professional activity, they admire the way I work.

a) Work

Work has a central expressive function for self, serves as driving force and gives emotional reward. Work is also relational, social bonds and social integration also arise from this source. Professional position and status are fundamental symbolic dimensions in her identity. Coming retirement constitutes a conflictive element. She would like to extend professional life.

b) Work versus Career

This is a classical case of success in public administration, with progression by invitation. Career is a central element in professional life; work was always envisaged in ascending plan. Started at the base of technical career and progressed to a top position along the years.

Regarding my professional career, I believe I am a privileged person, since not everybody has the opportunities I had (...) My career made me to grow as a person.

(...) I was chosen and worked with a set of very serious people and it was very gratifying because I learned a lot. (...) I believe it is important to enjoy working; there are people that work because they need the money at the end of the month. I work because I like working. I could already retire, I have enough years for retiring, but I do not want to, at least not while I can be useful.

c) Work versus Family

Professional life has always collided with private life; work has been the central element in self's life. Professional investment has lead to problems at the level of intimate relationships. Divorced twice, second husband is described as having fled away with secretary by lack of her attention. There is ambivalence in her appraisals.

I feel so well that I do not know if I would ever exchange this for a relationship. In fact, work played a role here (in family problems). Or maybe that's also why I like work so much. No, No, that's not it, I always enjoyed working, you know, when I am in vacations, I take time, I need the vacations, but then I am always anxious to return to work.

Peripheral element of the sub-type:

- **Profile 2.** Woman, in her late fifties, lower education, administrative in a private company of logistics and transports, divorced, one daughter. This profile is a peripheral one regarding the career dimension; but it provides a good contrast with the previous one, regarding the patterns of dealing with expected retirement.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

She progressed smoothly until the end of technical education, and started working as secretary at that time. Changed to her actual job through personal contacts, has been working there for 36 years and is approaching retirement.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Younger child, divorced, one daughter, one grandchild – Traditional trajectory with a negative phase around 7 or 8 years old, when her parents divorced. Stayed with her mother, married, had a daughter but divorced some years latter. Her daughter also stayed with her until marriage. Lives with her mother and dedicates most of her free time to her grandchild.

c) Work

Central to work is economical stability for private life. Peripheral elements are expressive, related to pleasure and personal appreciation, which comes out of professional occupation.

d) Work versus Career

Although she was worked in the same company for more than 30 years, she always envisaged this job as professional occupation, without specific plans of career.

e) Work versus Family

Relations between work and family were never a problem. She was always able to coordinate private and professional life, although she recognises some difficulties in the past (she had the support of her mother for taking care of her daughter).

Sub-type 1.4: I have career plans for the sector where I work: a second choice profession

➤ **Profile 1.** Man in his fifties, low education, second marriage, 2 sons, manager in a private company of logistics and transports.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

Regular progression, completed commercial school (9th grade). Started to work for economical reasons, had the opportunity for developing a career in the field of shipping. He has been in his job for sixteen years, and progressed to be manager. Found stability in professional life since the beginning of his trajectory, although he would have preferred a different field of work.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Describes family trajectory as cyclic; childhood and adolescence where marked by economic difficulties. First marriage with two male children ended in divorce mainly for professional conflicts. Three other relationships ended again due to professional involvement. At present, he is married and stable at the level of intimate relationships. The actual stage of his career allows for more dedication to family.

c) Work

Central elements of work are related to economical stability and comfort in personal life. Peripheral elements are expressive – personal learning of different skills associated to his

professional functions. He does not totally identify with his job, but never changed to his field of preference – engineering, mechanics.

d) Work versus Career

Although he feels some dissatisfaction with the nature of his job, his professional life was developed according to a plan of career. Didn't change profession because progression was possible and he decided to invest in it.

e) Work versus Family

Work had negative influence in family trajectory. His investment in professional life is seen as a source of conflict in private life, was related to the end of marriage and two other stable relationships. In the present professional life does not collide with private life.

Sub-type 1.5: I have career plans for the sector where I work - extreme cases: I want a career more than a job...

- **Profile 1.** Man, 27 years old, higher education, single and still living with parents. Working in the private sector – consulting services.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

He had a regular progression until the end of university. Finished a degree in engineering and started working right after. Then he changed job because he did not like to work as engineer. Some time later changed once again, to the field of management/finances in a bank. Although he enjoyed this job, he accepted an invitation for a position of consultant at a remarked company. Still working there, he is feeling like he wants to change once again.

(I want) to change, because I m not satisfied where I am working right now, and I want to change, that's it... and it will happen, sooner or later it will happen (...) Because I think that what's being done at the place where I work is not, hum... is not compatible with the objectives I have for me... and they will not change, so it is easier that I change ... because I have objectives that are not compatible with what I am doing right now.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Stability

There are no important changes in family trajectory until adult age; lives with both parents and younger sister. Qualifies his family as a normal one, although very absorbing; underlines strong presence of mother and the passive role of his father.

c) Work

The central elements of work are based on a notion that a person should have objectives and try to have successful career. He is willing to try, but is not very clear for him how that's going to be done. The content of work and functions are not the main road for it.

Right after finishing me degree I did the first mistake of my professional life, which was accepting the first job I was offered. Because I thought I had to work. So I began working at a place I hated, and then of course I left....I was pretending to be an engineer, and at the same time doing the commercial parts... and so... (...) no, it wasn't possible to go on. Then I began working at my father's company for a few months, the work was normal, I was an engineer, which was something I never... I mean I always wanted to be an engineer, but working as an engineer was not that attractive to me...

His high expectations lead to disappoint and he is always looking for *something* better.

And when I was working at my father's company there was this add in the newspaper, saying there were vacancies for... well for a very specific area within (a private bank), And I applied, did the interview, some tests, the interview, everything went fine, there were ten thousand candidates, ten were chosen for a open day (...) I went to this open day, and they told me they were very interested in me, I was among the best they had seen. Then... I went... hum... and it was a bit strange, because I enjoyed being there, but... hum. I was working in the area they had told me was the most dynamic one, and with the best prizes and benefits, but.. I had a director with many problems in his head... and besides I had to work with a colleague who was very jealous, very afraid I was going to take away his comfort place. (...)

d) Work versus Career

An ascending career is a central element. Professional progress is not depicted as dependent upon learning, but upon finding prestigious placements in prestigious organisations.

And at the same time I still kept regularly in touch with someone who had interviewed me, hum... from Deloitte Consulting, and when I had had the results they had told me very clearly that they wanted me there, but at that moment ... it was not possible... and (...) I kept in touch with that person, and then one day he sends me a mail saying "we want you here, wherever you are right now does not matter, we want you here". And I had decided I had to try being a consultant and so... maybe it was a mistake, but I decided to go, it's where I am now.

Success, status, money and rapid progression are fundamental components of self's relation to work.

Hum...yes....for instance at the (bank) and even right now at Deloitte, I become much more of a YUPI than I was before... (...) I absorbed all those experiences from those places where I worked, and.. at the bank, for instance, fifty percent of my time was dealing with people which were working in London or Paris, and so, and doing the same I am doing, but in those places, so of course it contributes to.. of course it does, so that right now my objectives are exactly to do this.. hum, somewhere else, not here (in Portugal).

e) Work versus Family

Work is the central element in self's life. Not being married and having no children is associated to the absence of conflicts between family and work. Relation between the spheres of family and work is seen as not problematic.

2.3.2 Type 2: My job is not my career

These are individuals who have a job, an occupation, but (1) either have no career plan at all, neither in their present working places nor in any other place, or (2) have a career plan elsewhere, and they are presently involved in occupations for which they do not see a future for themselves. There are different types of profiles here included, presented bellow.

Sub-type 2.1: My job is not my career, but I have a concrete plan for the future

This sub-type includes Profiles 1 and 2 (from interviews 1 and 10).

- **Profile 1** - Man in his forties, higher education, married, 1 child, working in polytechnic institute, finishing a PhD.

a) Education and work - Narrative Type: Cyclic

After completing a 1st degree in Sociology, he applies for a master in Anthropology, but quits. Then he begins a PhD program in Sexology, but he quits again, due to the influence of a professor he met. This encounter initiates a new ascending line in his post-graduate project – master (social psychology) and PhD (which he is now concluding).

At the professional level, he starts working in the public administration sector (Finances) while still at university, then changes to the sector of Health, to the field of sexual education. However, he never saw this as a job for life, or a career. Through personal contacts he starts a part-time collaboration as a teacher at a Polytechnic Institute, which is now his present full-time job.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Cyclic

As the younger child of an old couple, with three much older siblings, he describes family life as negative ever since he can remember. His father died when he was 13 and he only met his older brother when he was 5, due to the war situation in Africa. He expresses no identification with his family, and in his twenties he left home and got married – by then he already had financial independence due to the first job. He has been married for 25 years now, has one 18 years old daughter, and qualifies this family relationship as positive. Along the years has introduced some of his friend in his familiar nucleus.

“My family meets my colleagues, my colleagues meet my family, so I tend to mix, and so, some aspects of the evolution of my own family are linked to people I met at work.”

c) Work

Work evokes self-fulfilment, challenge, stimuli. His new and current job as teacher is a source of personal fulfilment. The diversity of functions (teaching, conducting research and formation) it demands are seen as opportunities for enrichment, and carry symbolic significance regarding his identity – they allow him to meet different people, to establish informal and affective relationships, to be creative. Central to work are also relations, since professional relationships often turn into close friendships.

d) Work versus Career

For many years he worked in the public sector. However, it was mainly for financial reasons, and always envisaged a career elsewhere - only now, that he considers teaching as a job for life, is he developing a career. He did not identify with the dominant values from the public sector, and this was determinant for his constant willingness to change.

“and so, I think (...) I am now entering a phase when indeed there is now a full juxtaposition between what I am outside, and what I am in my profession “

e) Work versus Family

Work was a way of conquering independence from his former family and also of supporting the new one. Presently, family and work are closely integrated spheres – often professional relationships develop into personal ones, and enter the family context.

- **Profile 2** - Woman, in her forties, higher education, married, no children. Works in a bank as human resources technician and is currently finishing a PhD.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Cyclic

She had a regular progression from primary school until the end of secondary school. Then a regressive period begins with transition to university - she is not selected for her first choice (medicine). She tries biology, does not like it and decides to try psychology. This decision takes her to a new progressive period in her educative trajectory. Slowly, she finished the degree, a master, and is currently concluding her PhD – her final goal at the level of education. She began working at a bank while completing her first degree and has stayed there ever since. She has progressed from bank-cashier to the human resources department. Now she wants to change and start an academic career.

b) Family - Narrative type: Cyclic

An only child, she maintains no contact with her parents (intentionally). Her childhood and adolescence are described as unhappy periods, when she did not feel personal and cultural identification with her parents and felt they were preventing her from being who she was. She left home when she was 18, and had a first marital relationship, which she characterises as negative. Her current marriage is seen as positive and has initiated a progressive period in her trajectory. She does not want to have children. She defines her friends also as family.

c) Work

Central elements are related with expressive meanings for self – a way to achieve development, self-fulfilment, independence, security and autonomy. Peripheral elements emerging within this profile are monetary stability.

d) Work versus Career

In the bank where she currently works, she decided to invest in the Human Resources area, since this was the best way to apply and develop her personal competencies. She values academic competencies, and the PhD is seen as a bridge to change – she wants to have an academic career, which has a symbolic value more significant to her identity.

e) Work versus Family

Work comes first. Family is an option that must not interfere with individuality and the independence associated to work. Work related to PhD had some negative impact in family life – less availability to her husband and relatives.

Sub-type 2.2: My job is not my career, and I have a vague plan for the future

➤ **Profile 1.** Man, in his twenties, mid education, single, no children. Working in external services at a company of transports and logistics.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Progressive trajectory until 10th grade; then he failed several times, changed from sciences to arts, because he thought it was easier. He never finished the 12th grade, mainly for his musical interests – he discovered these interests, entered a jazz school, but quit after some time, because more effort and practice than what he giving were needed. He started working at his current company in order to buy musical instruments, first for a trial period, afterwards in full-time. He has this job for 4 years.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Parents divorced when he was 3, mother married again, younger sister born when he was 6. Relationship with father was not close. During adolescence he had many conflicts with older brother. Family relationships were tense, mainly for lack of space in the house. Left home in the beginning of his twenties due to conflicts with mother, began living with his girlfriend and friends; this relationship ended and he moved alone to a house of the family. Restarted relationship with girlfriend, but is still living alone.

c) Work

Central elements of work are negative – obligation and restriction. He does not like to work, what he likes to do – music - is considered as something different from work. Monetary income is a peripheral element and permits to do what he likes (music, in his spare time).

d) Work versus Career

He doesn't have a plan of career at the level of profession. Would like to develop a career in the field of music but this is only a possibility, nothing concrete.

e) Work versus Family

Work and family don't collide although he says that in the past he was not able to develop more his musical work for lack of support from the family, specially his mother.

Sub-type 2.3: My job is not my career, and I have no plans for the future, only an occupation that I need

➤ **Profile 1.** Work is a sacrifice and material goals are the only return from employment.

Man, 43 years old, lower education, married, one daughter. He has an administrative function in the private sector in the field of Insurances.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Cyclic

He attended a private school where adult control and surveillance were strict. A regressive phase started when he changed to an Official school – with a higher level of freedom he systematically missed classes and had negative results. Although he failed several times he was able to complete the 8th grade, but then his mother decided for a Private school once again. He finished the 9th grade with success, but abandoned school during 10th grade.

Through personal contacts, he entered an Insurance Company, and is still there. He does not speak about career plans or professional progression. Currently he is dissatisfied with the changes that have been happening in the company and complains he does not like his job.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Progressive

Lived with his parents until he was 25/26 years old, then he moved together with a girlfriend to an apartment. His girlfriend got pregnant and they married before the child was born. A daughter was born and the three live together. He describes his family situation as stable, although his daughter is going through a difficult phase, which stresses the couple.

c) Work

Work is construed in negative terms, as something that implies personal sacrifice. Its meaning is purely instrumental. Work represents a way of getting material benefits for private life. Professional performance depends upon external control, and he complains about the lack of autonomy in functions, and about the new organisational policy, which constrains his actions and sets more demanding goals. He never had a plan for a professional life or a career, and has the present occupation because he a friend opened this door for him. The theme of autonomy *versus* control was already present in his educative trajectory and seems to be repeated in his professional one as well.

At this moment, [work] is sacrifice, bad-mood, something bad, which is necessary. At this moment that's it (...) the company where I work has been going through some changes, and the last one was inclusion in a big one. Therefore, what we were used to, the working methods, relationships between co-workers, etc, has changed radically (...) now you have to work almost by imposition because you have to accomplish certain goals, it's not only giving our best, you have to accomplish goals, be it by giving your best, or some other way (...) So, it's something which collides with my way of being (...) in my kind of work... in insurances mediation we, you can have two positions, one is that you get a client and then you limit yourself to orient things and earn a commission, that's the way things work now, or you maintain a relationship with the client and you take care of everything, and now there's no time for it. Therefore, the relationships I have at the moment, both with clients and co-workers, because meanwhile we were all separated, we used to work all together and now we are all separated, was something that left me... you see, and I don't like this way of working...

d) Work versus Career

The central element is work, since it is seen as a mere occupation. He does not show any concerns for career; instead, he just wants economic return from his job.

e) Work versus Family

Work has some negative impact in family life due to his lack of motivation. Difficulties restrict his psychological availability to his wife and daughter. It is difficult to find out what is the central element for self – either work or family.

- **Profile 2.** Woman, 34 years old, mid education, clerk working in a private company of food industry and services, married, one child.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Cyclic

She had negative results while in 8th grade, and failed again in 9th grade, but in the following years was able to conclude secondary school. Worked as secretary in two companies and changed to her present job. She has this job for 9 years, but would now like to change to a

different field within the company – she would like to change from the field of finances to human resources or sales. Her academic level does not allow much more progress.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Younger child, one sister, married, one son – traditional trajectory, lived with parents and sister until the age of 27 and got married. She had a long relationship before her marriage, which was a cause of suffering when it ended. She has been married for 6 years and has a 5 years old son. Her marriage is going through a difficult period.

c) Work

Although described as pleasant, the central element of work is obligation. Important to work are also social bonds; relationships within the professional context were important for personal development.

d) Work versus Career

She has few possibilities of developing a career, since she lacks qualifications for progressing to a better position.

e) Work versus Family

Professional life and private life do not collide. She separates both contexts of her life.

➤ **Profile 3.** Woman, 32 years old, higher education, clinical psychologist working in the public sector (Health), single, living with parents.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

She has a degree in Psychology completed through a progressive trajectory. Her first job was in telemarketing, while she had no opportunities to work in her field of studies. Afterwards she found a job with the Ministry of Work, which she liked, but there were no contractual conditions for continuing. By personal contacts was able to start working in the public sector of health, as a clinical psychologist, a position she maintains.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Younger daughter, one brother, single, living with parents - progressive trajectory until adulthood; lived with parents and brother until moving with her boyfriend. Because this relationship ended a regressive phase began. With this separation she returned to her parent's house. At the moment she feels comfortable living with her family.

c) Work

Central elements are related to economical retribution, which derives from having a job. Economic independence is important for self since it gives more possibilities for personal autonomy. Peripheral elements have expressive functions for self – personal growing and responsibility achieved through professional experience.

d) Work versus Career

Work is envisaged as a job. She does not mention any plans for future career.

e) Work versus Family

Relations between professional and private life do not collide. Lives with parents and feels comfortable with both domains of her life. Work had a positive impact in family relations because self undergone through positive changes.

- **Profile 4.** Woman, 31 years old, mid education, working as clerk in a company of food industry and services, married, one child.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

Regular trajectory until 11th grade; at 12th grade continued her studies at night. She started a part-time job at a supermarket, changed to a full-time one, progressing from a position in the store to a more qualified one, in the company's office. In the present feels she going through a phase of stagnation, the routine of her function doesn't permit to develop much more.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Progressive

Younger child, one sister, married, one daughter – a traditional trajectory; lived with parents until the age of 26, when she got married. Married for 5 years, has a 2 years old daughter. Does not mention any kind of negative aspects related with family.

c) Work

Central element of work is having a professional occupation, a routine, a way of earning money. At peripheral level, work is important for self-development, for personal and professional learning through relationships with co-workers.

d) Work versus Career

Work is mainly a job, an occupation. Although self aspire to changes in professional life has few possibilities for progression.

e) Work versus Family

Work and family are two separated spheres of her life.

2.3.3 Type 3: I like what I do and personal relationships are central to it

- **Profile 1.** Woman, in her forties, mid education, married, two children. Working as commercial in a pharmaceutical company.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Progressive trajectory until secondary school; with negative results in 10th grade, she decides to study at night and starts to work in a pharmacy. Concluded 12th grade and left school. Achieved the top of the technical career of pharmacy, couldn't progress more and changed to a laboratory as commercial. She has been in this field for seventeen years and working at a Spanish company for 10 years.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Progressive

Younger child with an older brother presents a traditional family trajectory. Refers a very close relationship with her brother, married when she was 23, had one son and one daughter. With a marriage of 21 years, describes positive family relationships.

c) Work

Central elements of work are relational – communication, personal contacts and social bonds are very important for self. Across the years has developed close relationships with her professional contacts. Peripheral elements are related to know-how, responsibility and creativity.

It's an interesting professional occupation, I can meet many, many people, everyday I meet new people (...) relating with people of different ages has helped me a lot because everyday I meet different personalities which help me to develop my self (...) everyday is a different day, hum... and I like it, I like communication."

"Since I am in the field of sales and information (...) I talk to clients, hum... above all, when I'm meeting people I'm not only thinking of the sales I have to accomplish (...) I see the person I have in front of me, and if this person in that day ... if I feel that in that day I'm talking to her and she has a problem, I leave behind what I was going to do and show concern if she's feeling good, or not, if she wants she talks about it, if not she doesn't talk, because I don't have the right to ask her what is her problem, I just let her know that I felt she wasn't ok, and that I'm there to help in the way she wants, usually people are not used to this type of behaviour and so they share a lot their problems, I ear them, try to help, and I conquer good friendships because they can really see my human side, besides my professional one (...).

d) Work versus Career

Although she has started to plan her professional life in terms of career (left the pharmacy because she had no more options in the technical career), her present job doesn't offer many options. Nevertheless, she enjoys her commercial activities and sometimes she is responsible for the initial formation of new professionals in the company.

"In certain situations I have people for whom I am responsible, and they come with me, and I like to teach, hum... I share... usually I ask what are their doubts, hum... I adapt myself (...) I don't tell them what I know, I try to ask what are their doubts in order to clarify theirs".

e) Work versus Family

In the past, when the children were younger, professional pressure and responsibilities sometimes collided with private life. She didn't have the necessary availability for leisure times with her children.

- **Profile 2.** Woman, 40 years old, lower education, married, 1 daughter. Working as secretary in textile industry.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Cyclic

She describes a progressive trajectory, with negative periods during 4th and 5th grades after the death of her mother. At the 8th grade, she fails again due to family problems. She decides to look for a job and never completes 9th grade. Professionally, she has worked as administrative at different companies, experiences that she qualifies as positive. But she also had other less qualified jobs, for lack of other opportunities. She has now been working as a secretary in the same company for more than ten years.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Cyclic

An elder child, she has three brothers, and followed a regular trajectory until the age of 10, when her mother died. She was the older and had to take care of her brothers, being responsible for domestic life at their house. Her father married again and she stayed with her

family until the age of 21. Then she moved to live together with her boyfriend, got pregnant and married two years later. Lives with her husband and daughter.

c) Work

The central elements of work are construed through expressive and relational meanings - learning with professional relations and social contacts. Work is positive only when the activities are enjoyed. Instability in the company is disrupting personal motivation for work and has negative impact at the level of relationships between co-workers, *gossip, etc.*

d) Work versus Career

The central element is “having” a job. She never had a career project. Maintained jobs depending on the contractual conditions or financial stability of the companies.

e) Work versus Family

Family has been the central element of her life and work has had negative impact. Sometimes professional demands are a source of conflict because she feels she is some not supportive enough to her daughter, especially at the level of domestic tasks and routines.

- **Profile 2.** Woman in her fifties, low education, married, 4 children, working as chief administrative in the public sector of transports

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

A regular trajectory until the end of commercial school. Then she left school, married and had first a child very early (17 years old). Started her professional life as administrative in a military agency, but she didn't like the climate and culture of this organisation. Changed to her present job, and has been working there for more than three decades. Due to routine progression in the public sector, at present she is responsible for an administrative section.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Progressive

Traditional progressive trajectory at the level of family; lived with parents until marriage (17 years old). Had four children, mentions the help of her husband when they were young. Negative aspects related to family are absent from her narrative.

c) Work

Central elements are related to the achievement of self-development and self-learning through professional relations and new experiences. Supportive relations between co-workers are important for maintaining a positive climate within the working team.

d) Work versus Career

Work was developed across the years through the plan of career of public administration. Started as a secretary and now she is responsible for the section of information and archives. Valorises what she does, does not conceive her occupation as a simple job.

e) Work versus Family

Work had positive and negative effects in family life. Negative aspects were present in the beginning of career, when the children were young. Family obligations were sometimes

incompatible with a higher professional involvement. Positive aspects are centred in the relationships and exchange of ideas between co-workers.

- **Profile 3.** Woman, in her forties, higher education, teacher in secondary school, married, 2 daughters.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

Progressive trajectory until university; completed a degree in Portuguese and French Languages, started to work right after. With a definitive position in her school teaches for 12 years, although she had two periods working at the ministry of education, prefers to work as teacher.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Progressive trajectory until late adolescence, an intimate relationship caused a negative period with serious conflicts with her father. She lived with her parents until she finished academic studies and then moved together with her husband, and married 2 years latter. She had several unsuccessful pregnancies and this lead to a period of depression. Years latter she had two daughters, the oldest suffering from mental disability. This caused a new period of depression. Family live is very demanding, mainly for the extra-needs of her daughter.

c) Work

Central elements are relational; working relations, mainly with her students, are important for personal balance, for positive humour. Work has also expressive elements for self; teaching is rewarding, and symbolically relevant for identity. Relationships with colleagues are also very valued.

d) Work versus Career

Work is going through the plan of public teaching career. At the present she was a permanent position at her school.

e) Work versus Family

At the present, family and professional life are not in conflict; she has support for managing domestic obligations. While working in the ministry of education, had to stay distant from home for days, family life was problematic. Felt guilty for not being there and wants to be responsible for her husband and daughters.

2.3.4 Type 4: Working for a cause

- **Profile 1.** Man, in his fifties, higher education, divorced twice, two sons from first marriage, has a stable relationship, head of a trade union in a bank.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

With a progressive trajectory until 9th grade, conflicts with parents lead him to abandon regular schooling and to start his working life in a ship (uncle was a commander). He continued his studies on board, passed the exams as an external student and concluded secondary school. He had several small jobs, worked as archivist in the national association of companies overseas before the 1974 Revolution, afterwards started to work in a bank. 15

years latter he decides for a degree in clinical psychology. Although he had a progressive trajectory in the bank, he enjoyed the activities related to trade unions and labour commissions and decided to change is professional life. At present he maintains this double function in the bank.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Cyclic

Had a first marriage with two sons, which ended in divorce; they arranged for the younger son to live with his wife and the older with him. Remained single until his son was 18, and afterwards had a second marriage, which lasted 4 months. At present lives together with his wife but doesn't want to get married again. Recent conflicts with his nuclear family caused separation between them.

c) Work

Central element of work is productivity and performance. Work also means serving collective interests, defending the rights and causes of workers.

In my area, unionism, what counts is defending the interests, because when we discuss a collective labour contract, I am in that discussion and afterwards I am there, seeing that it is entirely respected, because the employers, they try to disrespect... that's why there are labour commissions and trade unions.

d) Work versus Career

Professional life in the bank was developed according to a plan of career – he started as front-desk and across the years progressed to chief of section. Abandoned this career to work for a cause (the cause of labour rights) and was elected several times for the trade union and labour commission.

I would not have left my position, with a career ahead of me, maybe not a fantastic one, but still, a career ahead of me, and I would not have given it up but for a cause, a stimulating cause.

And these functions I have right now... we have to see, this has a part, which is democratic, I mean, people vote in certain person for this function. It is our colleagues, who vote, and since they know me from a number of years, they know how I am; I have been lucky enough to... I mean I have their support, they have voted for me whenever I enter the elections. The first time someone suggested I should enter them, I was invited, but afterwards I have been in every election of my own will, I volunteer.

(...) This change, from one day working normally with my colleagues and then the next day being elected by them and to represent them, I believe it was the greater emotion, let's say it, that I had in my working life.

e) Work versus Family

Professional life has impact in private life. His high involvement in syndicalism consumes time, which should be spent with family; has to make many trips through the country. He tries to compensate family when is at home.

I have no time for entering work, no time for leaving it; I manage my own time the way I find fit, and that means I can take some moments for my family. Instead them (the colleagues he represents) no, they have a schedule and they have to abide by it. And this schedule, which was supposed to end by 16h30, it goes on and on, sometimes 6, 7, 8, 9 hours and when they arrive home, their children are already in bed, because the next day they have to get up for school. And so I think this is more difficult for them,

then for it is for me. The professionals of the bank, they are in a worse situation than those who defend their interests.

- **Profile 2.** Man, 63 years old, mid education, general director of a political delegation, married, two children.

a) Education and working trajectories - Narrative Type: Progressive

After primary school, he entered a seminar and completed the 6th grade there. Since he had no religious orientation, he went to Africa where he worked and studied. Completed secondary school, with several specialisations in management, started a degree in this field but never finished it. He was manager in two English companies of transports, first in Mozambique and latter in South Africa. He returned to Portugal after the revolution, worked in a company, which belonged to his family, and latter he had his own company in the field of international transports. Started his activities in politics and latter he was invited to coordinate a delegation in Lisbon. This is his actual job.

b) Family - Narrative Type: Progressive

Regular trajectory - lived with parents and four siblings until entering the seminar, married in Africa in his twenties, with a Portuguese woman, had a son and a daughter. Remains married.

c) Work

Central elements are related to the accomplishment of goals, developing skills, personal realisation, and leadership.

d) Work versus Career

Work was envisaged in a plan of career when he was in Africa. He invested in his professional specialisation at the level of management to improve his skills. In Portugal he worked in his own company being at the top position.

e) Work versus Family

Work has some impact at the level of family due to his high involvement in professional life. Nevertheless, considers that he's present in the important moments, whenever his family needs him.

2.4 Top-down analyses

The top-down analyses were conducted in accordance with three main steps. First, the material was inspected from the point of view of two dimensions that are regularly mentioned in the literature as organising meaning attributed to work – instrumental versus expressive.

Second, the narrative structure adopted by the informants to describe their educational, professional and family trajectories was classified; for this classification we followed the criteria described in Gergen & Gergen (1984).

Third, an examination of the type of relationship maintained by the spheres of work and family was also undertaken.

In the next sections the results of these analyses are presented, already in a format that allows them to be articulated with the results of the bottom-up analyses.

Top-down analysis - Categories and valorisation of meanings related to work

	Positive	Negative	Total
Instrumental/Material (pragmatic)	Ex: Subsistence 16	Ex: Obligation 9	25
Expressive (reflexive)	Ex: Self-development 33	Ex: Sacrifice 7	40
Relational	Ex: Receiving help 8	Negative Relations 2	10

2.5 Combining top-down with bottom-up analyses

Bottom up Type	Bottom up Sub-type	Top down categories	Interviewees
Type 1 <i>I have career plans for the sector where I work</i>	Sub-type 1.1 <i>beginning with the right foot</i>	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Woman, 25 years old, higher education, single, lives alone, no children, marketing and publicity.
		<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Woman, 26 years old, higher education, social psychologist, public sector of health,
		<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Woman, 24 years old, mid education, sub-manager in a clothing shop, married,
		<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Woman, 33 years old, higher education, probationer in a market division of the public sector (transports).
	Sub-type 1.2 <i>consolidating a career</i>	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Man, 30 years old, higher education, IT Director in a private company of logistics and transports,
		<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Man, 40 years old, higher education, Coordinator of IT Projects in a bank
		<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Man, 37 years old, higher education. Product manager in the private sector – technological industry.
		<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Woman, 31 years old, higher education, Treasurer in public education sector
	Sub-type 1.3 <i>approaching the end of a career</i>	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Woman, in her late fifties, higher education. Director of services in sector of health, approaching retirement.
		<i>Instrumental/Material (pragmatic)</i>	Woman, late fifties, lower education, administrative in a private company of logistics and transports.
	Sub-type 1.4 <i>a second choice career</i>	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Man in his fifties, low education, manager in a private company of logistics and transports.
	Sub-type 1.5 <i>I want a career more than a job</i>	<i>Instrumental/Material (pragmatic)</i>	Man, 27 years old, higher education, private sector – consulting services.

Type 2 <i>My job is not my career</i>	Sub-type 2.1 <i>but I have a concrete plan for the future</i>	<i>Instrumental/ Material (pragmatic)</i>	Man in his forties, higher education, polytechnic institute
		<i>Instrumental/ Material (pragmatic)</i>	Woman, in her forties, higher education. Human resources technician in a bank
	Sub-type 2.2 <i>I have vague plan for future</i>	<i>Instrumental/ Material (pragmatic)</i>	Man, in his twenties, mid education. External services at a company of transports and logistics.
	Sub-type 2.3 <i>and I have no plans for the future, only an occupation that I need</i>	<i>Instrumental/ Material (pragmatic)</i>	Man, 43 years old, lower education. Administrative function in the private sector in the field of Insurances.
		<i>Instrumental/ Material (pragmatic)</i>	Woman, 34 years old, mid education, clerk working in a private company of food industry and services,
		<i>Instrumental /Material (pragmatic)</i>	Woman, 32 years old, higher education, clinical psychologist in the public sector (Health).
		<i>Instrumental/ Material (pragmatic)</i>	Woman, 31 years old, mid education, working as clerk in a company of food industry and services, married, one child.

Type 3 <i>I like what I do and personal relationships are central</i>	<i>Relational</i>	Woman, in her forties, mid education. Commercial in pharmaceutical company.
	<i>Relational</i>	Woman, 40 years, lower education. Secretary in textile industry
	<i>Relational</i>	Woman in her fifties, low education, chief administrative in the public sector of transports
	<i>Relational</i>	Woman, in her forties, higher education, teacher at secondary school

Type 4 <i>Working for a cause</i>	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Man, in his fifties, higher education, head of a trade union in a bank
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Man, 63 years old, mid education, general director of a political delegation,

2.6 Combining Bottom-up, Top-down analyses and salient patterns of relation to work

Bottom up Sub-type	Top down categories	Salient patterns of relation to work
Sub-type 1.1 beginning with the right foot	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Work as effort, competence and achievement - personal dedication, specific formation and investment in work will evidence personal skills, allowing progression
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Beginning a career – adjusting, investing, but without losing sight of polyvalence and continuous learning
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Work as personal and professional development: improving personal and job skills through experience
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Work is a source of learning and improving the nature of my job increased my social skills.
Sub-type 1.2 consolidating a career	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Career progression as a way for success
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Concentrate on progression, based on professional competencies, relations instrumental to career
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Work is related to technological evolution and specialisation, ensures career progression.
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Trying again, now with a degree - running against time, trying to still “make it” after a difficult start
Sub-type 1.3 approaching the end of a career	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Work has been the centre of my life – the anguish of seeing the time of retirement approaching
	<i>Instrumental/Material (pragmatic)</i>	Work as economical stability: a pleasant professional occupation while waiting for retirement...
Sub-type 1.4 a second choice career	<i>Expressive (reflexive) & pragmatic</i>	Work as economical stability: investing in a second choice professional career, but assuring quality in private life
Sub-type 1.5 I want a career more than a job	<i>Instrumental/Material (pragmatic)</i>	Trying to find a career - work as a source of success and status, functions not so important

Sub-type 2.1 <i>but I have a concrete plan for the future</i>	<i>Instrumental/Material (pragmatic)</i>	When work is not enough - PhD as a “Plan B” for autonomy and self-fulfilment... and for a professional change.
	<i>Instrumental/Material (pragmatic)</i>	When work is not enough - PhD as a “Plan B” for autonomy and self-fulfilment... and for a professional change.
Sub-type 2.2 <i>I have vague plan for future</i>	<i>Instrumental/Material (pragmatic)</i>	Work as something used for subsistence – and for keeping other options open (music), and the mind free of worries
Sub-type 2.3 <i>and I have no plans for the future, only an occupation that I need</i>	<i>Instrumental/Material (pragmatic)</i>	Work as sacrifice – material goals are the only return from employment
	<i>Instrumental/Material (pragmatic)</i>	Pleasant relations at work, and an occupation needed
	<i>Instrumental/Material (pragmatic)</i>	Work as economical retribution and financial independence.
	<i>Instrumental/Material (pragmatic)</i>	Work as professional occupation, daily routine and economic reward.

Type 3 <i>I like what I do and personal relationships are central</i>	<i>Relational</i>	Work as (also) social bonds- leading and maintaining durable relationships with clients and colleagues
	<i>Relational</i>	Work as relations – personal learning through social contacts in profession.
	<i>Relational</i>	Work as a way of learning about who we are: job experiences are important sources for personal development
	<i>Relational</i>	Teaching is a pleasure, a second nature, school and relations with colleagues and students very important, but strong commitment also for family

Type 4 <i>Working for a cause</i>	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Work as the possibility of serving collective interests
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Work as a form of using our better capacities and serving ours and others interests and being what we are

Spheres of influence and separation

1. Family-work: work preoccupations affect family - family preoccupations affect work
2. Career-work coincide, or do not coincide

2.7 Articulation of types, narrative structures and work-family, work-career relations

Bottom up Sub-type	Top down categories	<i>Educ trajectory</i>	<i>Work trajectory</i>	<i>Family - Work</i>	<i>Work - Career</i>
<u>Sub-type 1.1</u> <i>beginning with the right foot</i>	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Progressive	Progressive	Collide	Coincide
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Progressive	Progressive	Separated	Coincide
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Cyclic	Progressive	Separated	Coincide
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Cyclic	Progressive	Separated	Coincide
<u>Sub-type 1.2</u> <i>consolidating a career</i>	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Progressive	Progressive	Separated	Coincide
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Progressive	Progressive	Separated	Coincide
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Progressive	Progressive	Separated	Coincide
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Cyclic	Progressive	Separated	Coincide
<u>Sub-type 1.3</u> <i>approaching the end of a career</i>	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Progressive	Progressive	Collided in the past	Coincide
	<i>Instrumental/ (pragmatic)</i>	Progressive	Linear	Separated	Separated
<u>Sub-type 1.4</u> <i>a second choice career</i>	<i>Expressive (reflexive) & pragmatic</i>	Progressive	Progressive	Collided in the past	Coincide
<u>Sub-type 1.5</u> <i>I want a career more than a job</i>	<i>Instrumental/ (pragmatic)</i>	Progressive	Cyclic	Separated	Coincide

Sub-type 2.1 <i>I have a concrete plan for the future</i>	<i>Instrumental/ (pragmatic)</i>	Cyclic	Cyclic	Collide (+)	Separated
	<i>Instrumental/ (pragmatic)</i>	Cyclic	Cyclic	Separated	Separated
Sub-type 2.2 <i>I have vague plan for future</i>	<i>Instrumental/ (pragmatic)</i>	Cyclic	Linear	Separated	Separated
Sub-type 2.3 <i>I have no plans for the future, only an occupation that I need</i>	<i>Instrumental/ (pragmatic)</i>	Cyclic	Linear	Separated	Separated
	<i>Instrumental/ (pragmatic)</i>	Cyclic	Cyclic	Separated	Separated
	<i>Instrumental/ (pragmatic)</i>	Progressive	Progressive	Separated	Separated
	<i>Instrumental/ (pragmatic)</i>	Progressive	Cyclic	Separated	Separated

Type 3 <i>I like what I do and personal relations are central</i>	<i>Relational (& expressive?)</i>	Progressive	Progressive	Collide in the past	Coincide
	<i>Relational (& expressive?)</i>	Progressive	Progressive	Collided in the past	Coincide
	<i>Relational (& expressive?)</i>	Cyclic	Cyclic	Collide (-)	Separated
	<i>Relational (& expressive?)</i>	Cyclic	Progressive	Collided in the past	Coincide

Type 4 <i>Working for a cause</i>	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Progressive	Progressive	Separated	Coincide
	<i>Expressive (reflexive)</i>	Cyclic	Progressive	Collide (-)	Separated

2.8 Discussion

An obvious conclusion is that the construction of a career, and the concentration on a path leading to some future outcome, being already anticipated in the present, is accompanied by an expressive-reflexive relationship with work. A simply instrumental relation with work does not seem to be very compatible with the specific type of investment that a career demands.

The parallel observation is, of course, that an instrumental-pragmatic relationship with work – “having a job”- is more clearly present in patterns of relation to work that have a less clear preoccupation with constructing a future in the present. The notion of projecting what one is doing now into an anticipated future is less clear among those who use work as a way of achieving pragmatic and material goals.

An hypothesis can be advanced regarding the patterns of relation to work that are not structured according to the notion of “career” – they seem to be marked by cyclic educational trajectories, and sometimes also by cyclic work trajectories.

Among those who consider the relationships with other people a very salient dimension of their working life, the meaning associated to work is often simultaneously expressive.

Continuous learning is present in several formats and serving different functions. The profiles analysed show a clear variation. Continuous learning as formal learning at the university (masters and PhD levels) can be used for advancing in an already stable career; it can be a way for achieving greater polyvalence within a field where the person already has some specialised knowledge; but also for a new start after a difficult period, re-launching a new relationship with work; it can be a long term goal for changing for a more symbolically invested function or career; it can be a way of coping with an distasteful work.

From the profiles analysed it can be speculated that probably in an older generation the PhD and masters were more often instruments for radical changes in the line of work, and for the younger generations they are more envisaged as being a way for progressing in an already invested career and for polyvalence.

Although we do not have a really big enough sample for making generalisations, we can hypothesise that among the younger women beginning a career with high qualifications the pattern may be now more expressive, while it is possible that the relational pattern was more frequent among older women.

In the same way, stable and progressive educational and work trajectories seem to be more associated with expressive relations to work. And surely higher symbolic capital is linked to a higher valorisation of work as an instrument for expressing the self and for self-development and improvement through work.

Regarding the relation between family and work spheres, for the future it may be considered the importance of an higher level of flexibility at the level of work, sustained by technological support, since there are a number of solutions which were impossible in the past (video-conference, email, etc). On the other hand, it may be that certain domains of activity might profit with the introduction of non-traditional working schedules.

Substantive political intervention may be needed in order to introduce different orientations for public/private infrastructures and services, which may back-up working parents and their children. At this level, it may also be necessary to rethink organisational cultures in a way, which promotes balance between licenses of mother and fatherhood.

3. Intergenerational relations

From the interviews, a content analysis of the more salient terms used for describing age groups is summarised in the following table.

Table: Positive and negative meanings related to generations by age groups

	G1 < 30		G2 30-50		G3 > 50	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
About older people	Experience 7	Technological difficulties 8	Help and experience 24	Conformism Technological difficulties 12	Experience 3	Stagnation 3
About younger people	2	0	Energy 11	No experience Conflicts 16	Creativity 8	2

The material from the interviews is rather consistent with the material from the groups, since both from the interviews and the focus groups, we found three main emerging dimensions that structure the discourses regarding intergenerational relations.

1. A first dimension can be termed “denying the importance of age”.
2. The second is the dimension “experience versus innovation”;
3. The third concerns mainly the competition that may be found in “the same age group”.

Besides these three main dimensions, we have also some stories illustrative of the dynamics of intergenerational relationships. A final dimension emergent from the discussions regards possible ways of reducing inter-generational conflicts. We will approach all of these points below.

3.1 Denying the importance of age

The denial of the importance of age is expressed through several types of arguments, all of which avoid direct attribution of differences to age. It seems nevertheless possible to organise the variety of arguments in two main dimensions: internal and external explanations.

1. Internal explanations argue that people are not different according to their age, but instead, according to personality traits, ideological options, work function or their upbringing at home. Some examples are offered below:

Examples of explanations for denying the importance of age

– Ideological differences:

Differences (between people) are ideological, and ideological differences, they can found between me and a younger person, or between me and an older person. (int. 24)

– Work function differences:

With our colleagues with administrative functions it is sometimes difficult, because, maybe because sometimes less qualified people, and people with lower hierarchical positions, or that were never rewarded, in their professional career, we ... we have to be very careful... and sometimes it is difficult convincing them to use new work methods, but it has nothing to do with age.

– Upbringing explanation:

I refer to the family, the nuclear family of the person when she enters the working life; we bring something from home to the work relationship that makes a difference, independently of age.

– Personality explanation:

Hum...So, you see... that's the way the person is, it cannot be learned, and we bring our temperament to the work place.

2. For the external explanations, the arguments focus on how the differences are a result of the situation, and not age – stressing factors such as accrued labour pressure, because there are more individuals and less jobs, as well as differences in academic qualifications, and in type contract situation.

An example for external explanations:

The first thing I thought was that, more than an age difference, what we have is a difference (...) between those before 1993 and after that date, that is those with a definitive group contract, and those with a private individual contract.

On the whole, more internal than external explanations were used in the interviews and groups. It is possible to put two hypotheses regarding this preference for internal explanations:

1. Internal explanations are more compatible with the models of person our society has and diffuses – the individual, as the centre for decision and the master of his/her circumstances is the normative model.
2. It contributes for individuals to feel a greater sense of control – if explanations are internal, each one of us can try to control things from within, and avoid displaying the negative characteristics.

It is well know, of course, that internal explanations and attributions do not contribute to social change (Tajfel, 1978). Social movements are largely based on a perception of the characteristics of the situation as dependent upon a structural set of circumstances and as affecting a group with a common fate (Simon & Klandermans, 2002). Internal explanations of conflicts are less compatible, then, with the search for alternatives and with change.

3.2 Innovation versus experience

The main dimension organising discourses and stories about intergenerational relationships is the polarity between innovation and experience. This is an extremely central dimension, widely used. Everybody converges that experience belongs to older people, while innovation is brought about by younger individuals. Younger generations are seen as a source of innovation for work. Older generations are related to bureaucracy, stagnation and inflexibility to new methods of work, technical developments and new perspectives.

This central dimension admits, evidently, contradictory meaning. Experience can be depicted as positive, but it can also be negatively valued, as a form of making people more inflexible.

Here is a positive depiction:

“Some experience is important, and experience is not something one can acquire through reading, it has to be gained from contact, from working with people that have been in the places longer. So, I have nothing against young people entering the organisations, but please do not tell me that those who are there are not good any more. There are people with, let’s say 60 years, which are very valid.”

(...) I am very sorry for 2 or 3 of the people that will retire from here, which have a lot of knowledge, a lot of luggage.... we can have a degree in management, or human resources, and then we come here and suddenly we find out that we know nothing at all, because this has its rules, its legislation, and for us to understand things we have to follow those people... and get really close to them, and those people will be missed here, but well, I am here, I can help.

Nevertheless, experience can also be devalued in practice, and there are complaints and fears about that:

“(L) - (...) for instance, a person that works where I work, she tried... now things are harder regarding the mobility within the public administration, and she tried several places, and asked to be transferred, and could not, was not given one, and we talked and she said: “I cannot I am fifty four years old and nobody wants me”. And she is a woman, well, she has a difficult temperament, but she is an excellent professional and she knows really a lot, and no one valued her experience, she could not anymore...”

“Nowadays people think that those who are new... it almost... well... almost like the young person is going to save the organisation and our society really, experience is perceived as almost an handicap, as implying rigidified ways of working

(L) - (...) yes, and from now on, that tendency will accentuate...”

There are numerous mentions in the interviews and the groups about the classical example of older people having more trouble with technological innovations, and namely with computer innovations:

“For instance, I was offering a formation to a company, and most people were between 20 and 30 years old, but two people were closer to their fifties. With one of them, there was no problem, the person spoke good English and was open and informed. The other person had some difficulties, and that was not really the problem, the problem was that the person showed that by being older and more experienced... it was almost as if he did not want to learn. Feeling uneasy regarding the English, regarding the technical systems, he clammed up, and instead of talking, and of explaining... I was unable to involve him in the activities.”

The young are instead depicted as bringing “new blood” – modernity, innovation – to organisations, and innovation is seldom or never seen as de-valued:

“I wanted to prepare a modern Sector of Inspection. And I recruited only young people, only young people, I had one or two senior people that I needed, even because experience has to be passed on, and so I had to choose a few senior people. But the rest was young people. And I thought them everything. I formed them within the service; I was their Director and formed them. I very much enjoy working with young people. By the way, I want more young people here, its one of my goals for this year.”

“(L) - in the future this competition thing will be with the younger, because the younger will challenge us, regarding the power positions. (...) hum, and on the other hand the society privileges more and more, not experience, but young people, which bring innovation with them. Well, we are seeing that already, aren't we?”

Sometimes, however, innovation is seen as “pushing in the wrong direction”, is associated with young people attempting to climb up to the top as quickly as possible (as already exemplified with excerpts from interview 10).

In sum, and as can be seen from the extracts above, if the experience-*versus*-innovation polarity has the potential for being a positive polarity, in practice it can also be associated to problems. In theory, the two poles of innovation and experience are both positive and complementary; it can easily be argued that both innovation and experience are indispensable in the work context. However, if one term of this polarity becomes more socially valued and desirable than the other, becoming more indispensable, the potential complementarity disappears and is substituted by competition. There are indications in the interviews and groups that there is a fear that experience will be less and less valued in the future as compared to innovation.

3.3 Competition within “the same age group”

Although in the interviews it was not very clear that competition within the same age group can be a very clear trend, this came out in the groups. The main reasons debated in the groups for competition with people from the same age group being a marked one were the following:

1. Scarcity of power positions.
2. Clashes between individuals that consider themselves as having the same levels of knowledge, experience and competence.
3. No other variables (age, status) can serve as attenuators of the competition.

Some examples of how this was discussed are offered below.

F) – I think that the relationships are more difficult among people the same age... than the other way around. (...) What explains that people are not in so good terms when they have the same age is the fact that they compete for the same objectives ... when they are the same age; they compete for the same places (...).

(T) - (...) I believe that when we have the same age, each one of us in our age groups feels sure of the things we are good doing, and that generates conflicts... when we are younger or older... we accept ... (...) hum...when there is parity, and I think they are wrong and they think I am wrong, well, who will decide? (...) and because we are the same age, we have less respect, we listen less to each other and we accept less. I think this is to show that we are capable, to show us and to show the others, that we can, that we know what we are doing and why we have this job.

(L) – In a very competitive environment we have... sometimes... we have to do survival games, professional survival games (...) it has to do with survival, in a concrete way, Ii know for instance that there are very few top places... (...)

3.4 Stories of conflicts

From the point of view of younger people, the stories told usually accentuate conflicts in the relationships with older people, which take two main formats:

1. apprenticeship stories, where usually transfer of knowledge and emotional support are stressed as the positive outcome of the relationship;
2. complains about “not being taken seriously”.

Examples from both can be found below:

When I entered the bank, doing front-desk, two persons marked me (...) two older persons, a woman and a man (...) both in a positive way, but he was tougher. She supported me a lot, always saying “you are doing fine”, and was like, my mum, and he, he challenged me, and he thought me a lot (ent.1)

Stories from the point of view of young people stress that older colleagues do not take them seriously, as the one in the example below:

My PR colleague, for instance, no one takes her seriously, she has the same problems I have, no one takes her seriously, on the phone it goes, in public it is difficult. (...) (an older colleague) he did not say I was wrong, he knows I was not, now, the importance he attributes to what I was saying is small; he knows I am not saying something wrong, but does not pay attention to what I said.

Also salient in the groups, and told by both young people and middle-aged people talking about their past, are mentions and stories regarding situations where younger people are being repressed or de-valued by virtue of two dimensions:

1. a “moralistic” one, where the dress codes and ways of talking and behaving in informal situations, are censured;
2. a greater security felt in the job by older people, whose contracts date back to a time when restrictions to firing were stronger. This stronger position in the organisation is equated in the stories told with a stronger capacity for repressing the younger.

Regarding stories told about young people, besides accentuating an innovation dimension, already mentioned and described above, two dimensions are accentuated:

1. conflict – as is already clear by the content analysis, the young are depicted as more prone to initiate conflicts;
2. some stories also highlight the lack of initiative and concentration of the younger;
3. some stories depict the competitiveness of the younger.

Example of how the lack of initiative is referred:

(...) they seem to be more worried with what they are going to do that night than with what they have to do at work, and they expect us (the supervisors) to tell them where exactly they have to go, and what exactly they have to do... they do not research themselves, do not explore...

The competitiveness of the younger is very vividly depicted in the following extract. This person is referring the uncomfortable situation of some of those who are around forty years old. These are experiencing a “sandwich effect” at work - captured between the older and the younger generations. The following extracts vividly illustrate this position:

Now, what we feel, and this a shared feeling, it's that at my age, 40 years, people our age are feeling the “sandwich effect”, I mean, we have these little consultants, these young guys, coming from outside, not much more than boys and girls, full of stamina, they think they are going to conquer the world, full of those illusions we also had when we were 20, that we will change the world, we are eternal, we can do everything, we can everything, a bit like latecomer yuppies, I mean... and they are all about objectives, they want profits, quickly, fast, for yesterday, very, very fast, really fast and well, or perhaps not so well, but with a lot of profit.

And so, it's like this... from below we are being kicked for moving, from above, except for rare and honourable exceptions, they do not want to move, even because they are approaching retirement, and so we are being not only hit from these two sides, but we are also experiencing and living through a paradigm change, which is totally uncomfortable, where one does not have strategic orientations for working, a lot of tacit and implicit knowledge is circulating all the time, there are a lot of interest groups, and there you are, for instance, there is now in this institution a director with a lot of power, he is around 37 or 38, every year he receives a marketing prize, he's fabulous, and he says to whom wants to hear him that he does not work with people above 40, they cannot produce. And I want to see, I really want to see if he resigns when he turns 40.

3.5 Reducing conflicts

The groups also discussed ways of lessening conflict or avoiding it. The more frequent and developed forms offered as ways of reducing or mitigating intergenerational conflicts are listed below:

1. common objectives as a buffer for conflicts - higher level, common, goals reduce conflict between and within generations, reduce competition and increase cooperation.
2. organisational climate - has influence on conflict relations, on competitive pressure (the example of public sector shows the problematic role of uncertainty regarding future changes)
3. introducing changes at the level of career planning also a way of reducing conflicts
4. regarding the public administration, where a lot of changes are taking place at this moment, there was also a lot of discussion about the competition conflicts that the evaluation system will bring and is already bringing. Insistence upon the need to devise fair and transparent evaluation systems was clear.

4. Conclusions

4.1 General overview and discussion of salient features

One of the central themes, which emerged among the interviewees working in the public sector, is related to the present transformations, which are occurring at the structural level of public administration. These transformations are viewed as a source of instability, insecurity, and sometimes conflict, among the different contexts of activity, which were covered by our study. “A job for life” was a sort of representation, which was present in the beliefs and ideas of public workers, and public in general, but with political changes that are being undertaken, people now do not know what to expect from their professional future. Professional evaluation and promotions are also a problematic issue under scrutiny, since these new public policies implement rather different methods at the level of career progression. Working in the public sector has changed, and changes brought suspicion and uncertainty. Nevertheless, there are some references in our interviews, which underline a need for transformations in the public sector.

We are going to have a very significant change in public administration. And I think this change was needed. I recognise that, in fact, we have too much people in public administration. Like I have told you before, we are 253 people, and in fact there are only a few people working seriously. So I think this change is justified, but if it will be done with justice, if in fact there will be a selection of good workers, leaving the others, which are no good, I don't know. Here I will try that things may happen that way, but it's always really difficult. Because there are always requests, there are always things like that, and I'm glad it doesn't depend on me. But I think it was necessary, I think public administration has to jump, has to jump towards modernity, towards refreshment, it has to be more opened to others, to the others needs. People always have felt that because they had their places there was no danger to them, but now this is quite different, not even in the private sector, people have their individual working contracts, their term contracts, and with a compensatory payment, if they are no good, they are no good. And public administration also has to make that jump, that move forward. (Interview 12)

Nowadays, the world of work is such a complicated one, even if we are in public administration and don't have the problem, that we are going to have, we still have a secure job, we don't know for how long, but there is still this security, it still exists, but in no time it will disappear. (Interview 8)

Now, we have a huge dilemma, because someone has invented performance evaluation, at 2 or 3 years ago. And it is this evaluation, which will bring very big conflicts, not only between generations, but between everybody. (...) we have goals that we have to accomplish, but when goals are establish up side down, from bottom-up, and not top-down, everything is wrong. Isn't it? (...) than we have the problem of quotes, which is something horrible... and the biggest problem is that our salary will be levelled by these accomplished goals, like they do in the private, and not by rotation, isn't it? (...) There are no criteria. (Interview 8)

It will be a lot worst in terms of evaluation, because it will be much more difficult, and people will try to have better evaluations, because it's the way things are, and to speak about our case, public administration, evaluation will be done by quotes, and this will be much more complicated (...) even because this will be related to salaries and sometimes there is already some kind of negative climate regarding evaluation, so when this really starts to happen, maybe it will be even worst. And at that point, older people may be a little bit more facilitated, I don't know... they will have a better evaluation, maybe, I don't know. (Interview 9)

All these transformations in public administration - and the consequences that our informants are highlighting here - have clear impacts for intergenerational relations. In this sense, reducing intergenerational conflicts at this level demands that attention is paid to these points: de-valuation of experience coupled with over-valuation of unquestioned and non-negotiated

forms of innovation; interaction between stable and unstable contract workers. Same-generation competition, especially for the “sandwich” generation.

As a potential reducer of conflicts, the team orientation is also a possibility here. Institutional instruments for re-valuing experience and knowledge transfer and maintaining high levels of debate and negotiation of the different needs can also be ways of reducing conflicts in this context.

Re-framing innovation in accordance with the big picture of the team and organisational goals, questioning the “intrinsic goodness of innovation”, and whether what is being pursued in a particular context is “convergent” innovation (more of the same, through new means) or divergent innovation (really new ideas) are also forms of dealing with conflict, both in this context and others.

4.2 Salient features - Mutable work orientations and challenges for the future

Different societal organisations, with different institutions, laws, technological devices, practices and ways of organising and governing work, are linked to different subjectivities, or models of person. In turn, different subjectivities re-produce and sanction different institutions, practices and forms of organising work. Different subjectivities also use different types of argumentative resources and meaning categories to deal with the relation to work. In the long run, the process of re-production and the resistance it encounters also ends up transforming the received categories and models of person.

As a conclusion to this report we speculate in the points that follow on some possible trends and challenges regarding the future of patterns of relation to work, mostly seen from the point of view of the models of person they express. We of course ground the speculations in the data collected, but go a little beyond, considering possible future developments.

Point 1 – self and work

There are two main ways of understanding the self-work relation. One model of person-work relations says:

“I am what I am, and my personal characteristics are expressed in my work. What has added value for my job/position/career, and in the end, for society, are my personal characteristics. What I can give society is my distinct and specific set of characteristics. I will be a good or a bad worker depending on how well I am capable of using to the full my unique characteristics. The organisation is better or worse served depending also on whether or not it is capable of taking the best out of my specific characteristics. My stable personal trait is what helps me adjust to new situations at work, as in other areas”.

Examples of this model are mostly in interviews of older people, BUT not just.

The other model of person-work relations says:

“My work changes me, has changed me, I am a “malleable being”. I can learn new competences, I can be polyvalent, I can change. The organisation has to find ways of using my capacities for self-transformation. I can adjust to new situations by learning new skills.”

Examples are mostly in interviews of younger people, BUT not just.

The future of inter-generational relations will also depend on how well the organisation and the institutions of a society understand that these models co-exist and work together.

Point 2 – negotiating different models of relation to work and management

Mentions to change in the models of work, and the working person are relatively frequent. There are some depictions of how the different models are being negotiated within the organisations.

Models of work and their everyday negotiation:

“(...) and then I saw something fantastic, which was that commercial director, also involved in the interviews, and he was the older there, he is 50 years old, he has probably more than 15 years of work, he is, by the way, the only one that is not included the next wave of people who will retire, and he will not retire in the next 2 or 3 years. And he, since he will remain in the institution, he has to negotiate with all the identities in play, and he, who always was an humanist, at this point he is using economics arguments, but, it is interesting, because he tries to negotiate and to balance humanist and economist values, so as to show young people, and with numbers, the advantages of a humanist approach, but he never calls it humanist, nor does he say that he is focusing on people, he says it is for financial reasons... by the way, something that shocked me, was to see how that man, always so human and so concerned with people and with human resources, how he is now always talking about money, money, money. (...)”

This seems to point out that the daily negotiation of different models is a reality in the organisations, and the need to pay attention to it.

Point 3 – outcomes of the new models of work and working person

The fact that new models of work and working person are being introduced in the organisations, together with what one of our interviewees called the “sandwich effect” (explained above) may have important outcomes for the “Middle generation”:

And so, whatever we do, we are pressured from below and from above, and besides we have no orientations, no one saying what is the best way for acting. The outcome of that is that people are now working in a cautious way, a very detached way, people are de-connecting, emotionally disconnecting from work, which is something I find very strange. (...) In order to feel that I am well in my work, I need the affective component, my trainees are my boys, my little ones, and now... now that the philosophy is that “no one is irreplaceable and we only need those who are here”.... that forces people to be emotionally detached from his or her work, it is a new way of working....

As can be seen from the extract, one suggested outcome of the new models is an accrued emotional detachment from work. That is congruent with and can be enhanced by the current focus on polyvalence and constant decision making for the construction of a career. We approach this constellation in the next point.

Point 4 – “extreme cases” - only careers, not work?

Emotional detachment, polyvalence and “eyes on the future” when combined in a way not anchored in concrete interest and clear expertise in some field may lead to work trajectories more focused on career than on work.

Interview 17 may exemplify this extreme case constellation. The person states that he has always wanted to be engineer, but never saw himself working as such. Has worked as engineer in two places, changed to the financial sector of a bank, changed to a prestigious consulting firm, is already willing to change again, and go abroad, it is unclear what for: a specialisation or a job.

Maybe this type of relation to work will be more frequent in the future? The possible problems posed to organisations and work by this “extreme case” are also to be considered.

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