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Legitimacy and discourse circulation between media space and political space: the case of salary cooperation

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Abstract : The objective of the article is to study the traffic of speech between the media public place and the political place from a precise ground, that of the wage cooperation, through the gift of working time reduction days. At the end, it seems that the media centring focused on the human impact does not give to various stakeholders a visibility to defend their opinion as high as their investments and roles are. While the political schedule shows itself preponderant in the media importance granted to these situations, the politicians are much less audible than the employees. Those media biases favor then an imperceptible but important reduction of discussed questions.

Key words: legitimacy, circulation of the speeches, the media centring, the wage cooperation

Legitimacy and discourse circulation between media space and political space: the case of salary cooperation

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Galinsky, Bond and Friedman (1993) found that 40% of employees who have responsibilities to family members have difficulty balancing work and family life. The solutions are still commonly limited to arrangements within the company (Chasserio and Legault, 2005), which are more financially advantageous than government leave. Loarne-Lemaire et al (2014, 41) propose replacing this individual approach to family problems with a relational approach, in the broad sense, involving all the players with various links to the employee concerned (employer, relatives, family, friends, etc.). The search for solutions would involve the mobilisation of different stakeholders. The donation of RTT by employees to a colleague affected by a serious illness in his family has become a societal fact that illustrates this relational approach. It then became a media topic when these donations began to be the subject of articles starting in 2009. Finally, it became a political issue when these donations of days off - initially spontaneous and not regulated by law - led to a legislative framework. This framework gave rise to a bill voted on first reading on 25 January 2012, a law voted by both chambers in 2014 and a decree of application to the public sector in 2015.

So, how do the discourses on the actions undertaken by these employees and on the underlying notions of solidarity circulate between the media space and the political space?

Taking the example of a donation from RTT, which received wide media coverage in 2009 in his constituency (the Badoit case), a deputy of the UMP majority at the time, P. Salen, tabled a bill on a measure - not financially costly for the State - and potentially politically advantageous - solidarity being relatively consensual - "This is a subject where there is no longer either right or left", according to Paul Salen (Europe 1, 18 August 2011). The law will only be voted on three years later and the political debates taking place in parliament on this occasion in 2014 between the majority in favour of the law and the socialist and communist opposition will be fed by problems of substance (should we legislate on such a subject? Does this not cover a disengagement of the state?...) and form (is the RTT donation an egalitarian measure? is it up to the employees to assume the donation?...).

If it is true that public problems are always the result of conflicts of meanings between social groups, ideologies, different representations (Hall, 2007), the interest of this article is to see by which processes

a conflicting subject in the political space is no longer conflicting in the media space. By studying the circulation of discourses on wage cooperation between these two spaces, the objective of this article is to understand how and why critical opinions developed in parliament have been underestimated in the press.

To do so, this work combines three methods. Firstly, it looks at the media coverage of RTT's donations. The corpus is made up of 18 of the most publicized cases between 2009 and 2015, in order to study the underlying conflicts of framing and agenda in their duration. It is not enough to note that a theme has access to the press to measure the importance given to it. It is also necessary to look at the way the press reports on it. For the effects of framing weigh on the way readers appreciate the subject (Mercier, 2012). 136 written articles or radio and television reports dealt with these 18 gifts. The list of titles dealing with these subjects is diverse. The corpus is made up of 12 articles from the specialised press (magazine press), 45 summaries or reports from the national daily press, 44 from the regional daily press and finally 35 articles from blogs or websites (legal, health, social, institutional, family or management). The diversity of radios, televisions, newspapers, magazines, news websites and blogs that brought to light all the facts and events discussed collectively reflects the fragmentation of the media space. Integrating radio, television and press reports makes it possible to take into account the diversity of the media and the audiences to which they are addressed (Devillard and Marchetti, 2008, 150-151). Doing so with sites and blogs also makes it possible to take into account these new parts of the media space (Rouquette, *op. cit.*, 2010, 16).

This media framing is, secondly, put into perspective by studying the point of view of stakeholders based on an interview with a politician (Senator Catherine Deroche, rapporteur for the law in the Senate) and a journalist from the regional daily *La Montagne* (who wrote an article on the RTT donation to the SNCF Auvergne, *La Montagne*, 29 April 2014). These interviews were conducted with a guide organised around the media coverage of the RTT donation (conditions, reasons, content, perceptions). Studying the point of view, feelings and arguments of the actors wanting to promote these facts (Cobb and Ross, 1997) sheds light on the perception they have of their actions. It also makes it possible to simultaneously analyze the construction phase of work/family balance as a public issue and its media circulation phase "in order to take into account the inseparability of the communication process" (Comby and Grossetête, 2007, 1).

This media framing is, in the third place, compared to the political treatment of this issue. For this research, we used the reports of the debates of the social affairs committee of the National Assembly (20 pages) and the Senate (26 pages). To do so, we need to clarify the differences between the political and the public media space. The public media space is a space for discussion in which the discourses held by different actors in a society are confronted. It is one of the bodies that both bring to light all the problems dealt with publicly, manage and direct this attention by selecting the subjects made public, and participate in the organization of debates between citizens on these subjects (Quéré, 1995, 12). It is made up here of press articles, TV and radio topics, and blog posts dealing with RTT donations. The public media space differs from the political space in that, in the latter, it is no longer just a matter of deliberating and discussing, but of deciding the affairs of the city and taking action (Wolton, 1997). Political space is linked to the notion of power (*ibid.*). It is made up here of the political debates held in parliament and the legislative decisions on the granting of RTT, decisions - this is one of the additional challenges of the political public space in relation to the media public space (*ibid.*) - that are applicable throughout the national territory.

1. The overriding political agenda for the promotion of RTT discourses

The circulation of discourse between the public media space and the political space will first be studied from the perspective of the promotion of these cases of wage cooperation. Which actors, which stakeholders, prove to be central in the constitution of these societal facts in publicly discussed problems?

1.1. The seemingly central media role of employees

Mathys' father, who benefited from a 170-day RTT donation in 2009 from his colleagues at Badoit, was a pioneer in publicizing a problem that was initially private. Between 2011 and 2014, 24 subjects, exclusively dedicated to the case, were published mobilizing different media supports (local and national daily press, general and specialized magazines, radio, television, online newspapers).

Is the action of the employees in the Badoit case enough to explain the media importance given to these issues? Indeed, media coverage is not self-evident, if only because the beneficiaries do not necessarily want their story to be covered in the media in a complex family context. While the mobilization of donor colleagues is indispensable, it remains largely in the shadows, often to respect their will, as the journalist interviewed for this research admits: "Contact with colleagues is rare. Colleagues prefer not to communicate.

Moreover, this media coverage depends in particular on external factors, both before and after the actions covered by the media (Neveu, 1999). Thus, Mathys' parents are willing to maintain interest in order for the donation legalization process to be completed. They are soliciting MP Paul Salen to initiate legislative work. The same process is then undertaken by the parents of Éva, eight years old (case of the Nancy police officer, 2014) or Nicolas' mother, seventeen years old, suffering from cancer (case of the care assistant at the Montaigu hospital, 2014). Public sector agents, they will publicise their story (press, radio and social networks in the first case, press in the second), highlighting that they obtained donations of RTT days from their colleagues without being able to benefit from them, in the absence of a vote on the implementing decree. Indeed, in both cases, the hierarchical superiors of these parents refused to set up the donation as they had no specific law for the public sector on which to rely. "As there is still no [decree], we do not know today [December 2014] how it should apply to our employees, who are entitled to it because it is the law," admitted Catherine Daries, hospital director in the Hautes Pyrénées (Today in France, December 9, 2014). In order to increase the attention paid to these speeches made by anonymous people, defenders of a citizen's gesture, a media relay by political leaders in the field is decisive. Thus, Deputy Paul Salen, (187 quotes in the general and specialized press - written, television, radio, blogs and websites), who is the bearer of the bill, Senator Catherine Deroche, (67 quotes), rapporteur of the bill on the RTT donation, and Marylise Lebranchu, (82 quotes), Minister of the Civil Service who supported the vote on the decree of application to the bodies of the State, have defended the relevance of the actions undertaken in the field by alluding to them twice on their blogs.

1.2. The primacy of the political agenda

A number of press articles, audiovisual reports and online posts devote attention to this wage cooperation at key stages of the legislative process: the tabling of the bill (2011), the vote on the law in

the National Assembly (2012) and then in the Senate (2014) and the official publication of the decree of application to the civil service (2015). Thus, between 2012 and 2014, this corresponds to 68 articles, reports and notes, out of the 136 in the entire corpus. Conversely, this media coverage is low before the legislative debates. Between 2009-2011, 20 articles, reports and online posts are devoted to these issues. This media coverage then declined rapidly with 48 articles between the end of 2014 and the end of 2015.

With this large number of media productions, mainly between 2012 and 2014, the press seeks to illustrate, or even advance, the parliamentary debates: "It is our modest contribution to move things forward", the journalist interviewed admitted. In other words, it is the media agenda that adapts to the political agenda, not the other way round. It is then necessary to look at the motivations of the main stakeholders responsible for the legislative treatment of these issues. Senator Catherine Deroche explains that she herself was approached by her fellow Member of Parliament: "Paul Salen had tabled his bill. To be effective, it must be seen by the Senate. He asked me to ensure that the bill moves forward and is extended to the public service in particular. His motivations are therefore above all related to the management of the life of the city: "The donation of RTT allows the beneficiary to benefit from better paid days because the illness causes additional financial burdens" and corresponds to a real need (1,500 families would potentially be concerned) according to the MP (Le Monde, 19 December 2014). The importance of controlling such solidarity initiatives justifies the role of political leaders, as Catherine Deroche tells us: "The law was useful to put safeguards in place. The purpose of the donation in particular. It was necessary to specify. We didn't want people to give away all their days off".

The initiative of the media in the collective agenda is therefore limited. Certainly, the mobilization of employees and parents is unavoidable. However, the mediation of a member of Parliament who deems it politically appropriate to take up this issue proves to be central. The intervention of political leaders will occur twice more (with the Senator and the Minister of Public Service) to move the legislative process forward. To support the legislative process, they will not hesitate to intervene in the media. The media must then, of course, be considered as one of the participants in the agenda-setting process, but this calendar shows that in this field, the media play "more often a relay role in relation to problems brought by other actors than an initiating role" (Hassenteufel, 2010, 52), putting into perspective - here as elsewhere (*ibid.*) - the thesis of the primacy of the media in the prioritization of problems considered important by the population.

For the media, the interest in promoting these wage cooperations as public problems is high as long as they concern situations outside the law. This interest is reduced as soon as the law and decree come into force. The importance of the legal treatment of donations and therefore of the political agenda in the media coverage of this cause is clearly shown by this remark by the journalist interviewed here: "Now [2016], the role of the journalist is less relevant and even debatable. The journalist no longer has anything to contribute. He no longer surprises his readers.

In the end, the intervention of political leaders in order to make these societal facts into public issues is paramount. Has the media, however, treated these facts as a political issue? Is the place given by the media to the political framework commensurate with the role played by elected officials in promoting these actions? This implies giving significant importance to the ideological and moral dimensions of these issues and giving visibility to the comments of political leaders. On the ground, such a state of affairs is not, as we shall see, respected.

2. The media framing of wage cooperation: the undermining of the political dimension

2.1. From legislative commentary to social treatment

The study of media framing is a marked out approach in the field of media analysis. It basically aims at answering the following questions: from which angle is this subject treated, in which regime of problems is it inscribed (Mainil, 2015, 10)?

In order to answer these questions, a typology of the media frameworks used here needs to be established. Neuman, Just and Crigler's typology has been used as a first reference. Their research distinguishes four frameworks: the conflict framework, the economic consequences, the human impact and the morality framework (Neuman, Just and Crigler, 1992). An exploratory approach made it possible to verify the usefulness of this typology on the following condition: adapt these frameworks to the topics discussed in our articles and develop the criteria adopted accordingly (Table 1).

Preferred framework	Criteria
Responsibility/solution	Does the media account of these wage cooperations suggest who is responsible for the situation (e.g. here: does it suggest that the government, companies are responsible for these situations preventing parents of sick children from staying at their bedside)? Does it suggest legalizing existing solidarity practices?
Human impact (Human dimension)	Do the articles and reports publish testimonies of support, help, personal distress (testimonies of illness, fatigue, courage of the child) so as to generate feelings of empathy, sympathy or compassion?
Judgement (moral and/or political)	Do the subjects refer to a certain morality or value judgements, discuss the correctness of the law and judge the value of the behaviours commented on?
Economic Consequences	Are there references to financial losses of the families concerned or the expenses generated by these situations? Are the economic aspects of the law mentioned?

Table 1: Media framing of wage cooperation

The application of these criteria to the 136 written articles or radio and television reports studied yields the following results.

	Media framing of the article or story (%)				Corpus of 136 articles
	Responsibility/solution	Human impact	Judgement	Economic consequences	
Total	64 %¹	63 %	27 %	10 %	

¹ Un article peut développer des paragraphes relevant de cadres différents : plusieurs réponses sont donc possibles.

Badoit (commented in 2009, but especially 2012 and 2014)	100 %	41 %	44 %	15 %	39 art.
Fuji-Autotech, 2011	50 %	71 %	21 %	7 %	14 art.
Groupe Pierre Guérin, 2012		100 %	33 %	33 %	3 art.
Ardennes, 2012		100 %			2 art.
SNCF Auvergne, 2013-2014	33 %	66 %			3 art.
Policier de Nancy, 2014	90 %	61 %	38 %	24 %	21 art.
SNCF d'Ille-et-Vilaine, 2014	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	1 art.
At the Montaigu hospital, 2014	100 %	100 %	20 %		5 art.
Traminots de Nice, 2014		100 %			15 art.
Réalmont, 2015		100 %			1 art.
Omnitrans, 2015	10 %	90 %			10 art.
Rive-de-Gier, 2015		100 %			3 art.
Pochet du Courval, 2015	66 %	100 %			3 art.
Villeneuve-d'Ascq, 2015		100 %			1 art.
Leader Price, 2015		100 %			1 art.
DPS&CO, 2015		100 %			2 art.
Gibaud, 2015	89 %	89 %	66 %		9 art.
Hôpital Isère, 2015		100 %			3 art.

Table 2: Evolution of the RTT donation framework between 2009 and 2015

The primacy of the political agenda should be reflected in the primacy given to explanations of the legal and moral ins and outs of the law. This is not the case.

As shown in Table 2, the media treatment of RTT donations favours two frames:

- that of responsibility (an unsuitable law)/solutions (legislating) on the one hand (64% of the 136 articles published thus develop the "responsibility/ solution" framework (88 articles out of 136),
- the individual angle on the other hand (parents' distress, children's courage: this angle concerns 63% of the published subjects).

On the other hand, the political angle (political judgment) and economic angle (the economic costs and benefits of the law) are underestimated. Several explanations can be put forward to explain these implicit media choices.

The first is to reason as follows: at what period is the political framework predominant? Mainly when the illegal nature of solidarity actions makes them a "good object". The surprising character of the information (illegal solidarity) makes it interesting. Journalists can indeed assume that many readers/employees see a lack of solidarity in their daily lives and that such solidarity dissolves with the weakening of work collectives that characterizes the evolution of daily professional relations.

These critical arguments are, secondly, only taken up in the press at the time when the law is being discussed, in other words, at times when the political agenda justifies - from the media's point of view - a political treatment of this news. This could be seen as an over-cautious approach, as this option is particularly characteristic of regional titles. Titles that are marked by a desire to reach the population of a region, all political parties taken together, even if this means giving priority to positive local information. From this point of view, events organized around RTT donations (walks, meals, etc.) have

the double advantage of promoting local action without "fear of taking sides between components of the terroir or the city that may also be readers" (Neveu, 2015, 173).

Thirdly, however, we must also consider that the depoliticized treatment of social issues is the consequence of an increasingly depoliticized positioning of the newspapers themselves. As Juhem (2001, 113) notes, the demand for neutrality of newspapers implies that they can no longer engage in a "political proposal on their behalf, otherwise their editorial staff will be questioned as 'engaged' and 'politicized'". Journalists are led, by the logic of their professional position, to confine their activity to commenting on existing political offers" (ibid.). The political framing of wage cooperation would have been easier if the opposition parties had made this issue a major political issue, increasing the number of criticisms and political stances. This is not the case, the priority of the opposition in this presidential campaign period (1st half of 2012) being to denounce the government's economic policies. This is why - as Table 2 shows - the newspapers prefer a "factual" rather than editorial treatment of this issue. Even if this "social" treatment of wage cooperation does not abstract from implicit judgements (valuing solutions initiated by private actors [colleagues, friends] directly managed within companies).

2.2. Towards the reduction of the political dimension of the debates

However, this change in the media framework has resulted in a reduction in the terms of the debate. One need only look at the legislative debates to see that RTT donations have nevertheless raised questions in the political arena. To measure the importance of this discursive and argumentative reductionism, two documents can serve as a reference for this comparison: extracts from the debate of the social affairs committee of the National Assembly and the Senate. These records make it possible to grasp the political, economic or moral reservations expressed during the examination of the bill and taken up during the examination of the text of the law. For example, the counterparts of the charitable dimension of the law are questioned by several members of parliament: the PS deputy Michel Issindou wonders "Why not resort to labour law, rather than to collective good will [...] even if their anonymity will be preserved, the colleagues of an employee whose child is seriously ill [...] will feel more or less obliged to make a gesture". The unequal nature of the situation of the employees is underlined by elected members of the opposition: for Jacqueline Fraysse, communist deputy, "The employees are not entitled to the same number of days depending on whether they work in a small or large company, which creates inequality". On another level, the link between RTT's donation and solidarity is questioned by the environmentalist senator Aline Archimbaud: "We are in the field of mutual aid and care; it is a question of generosity, not solidarity".

The relevance of legislating on solidarity divides both the National Assembly and the Senate - including among the deputies approving the collective approach of employees - "Should it be given the force of law?" asks Jean-Patrick Gille, PS deputy, for whom "transforming a gesture of solidarity into a legislative provision risks losing its most positive aspect, which is its spontaneous nature". Because, "it is paradoxical to legislate on behaviour that should be natural", says Catherine Génisson, PS senator.

In the end, during the vote on the bill, the text was supported by the 136 deputies from the right and the centre, the Socialists abstained and the Communists and the Left Front opposed it. The same political cleavages can be found in the Senate, with each political party sticking to its own positions.

But, in fact, the content of these political discussions is not systematically included in the articles published when the law was voted (Table 3).

	Title of the article	Does the article mention the results of the vote in the Senate (favourable, unfavourable, abstention)?	Does the article detail the arguments of the senators who opposed or abstained?	Does the article detail the arguments in favour of the bill of the senator rapporteur of the bill?
<i>L'Express</i>	The gift of time off, the "charitable" idea that annoys the left	x	X	x
<i>Le Monde</i>	The donation of RTT to a colleague whose child is ill authorized by the Senate	x	X	x
<i>Le Nouvel Obs</i>	Gift of RTT: 3 questions on an expected breakthrough	x		x
<i>Le Parisien</i>	RTT's donation soon legal	x		x
<i>La Croix</i>	Employees will soon be able to donate rest days	x		x
<i>Direct Matin</i>	The Gift of RTT: How will it work	x		
<i>20 minutes</i>	Giving RTT to a colleague whose child is sick is now possible	x	X	x

Table 3: Comparative structure of national press articles as of April 30, 2014

Of the seven national dailies in the corpus, while all the newspapers recall the results of the vote and give - except Direct Matin - the arguments in favour of the law, only three (*L'Express*, *Le Monde* and *20 minutes*) quote the arguments of senators who are opposed or abstaining.

The media give a prominent place to the three major political players in this issue (Paul Salen, Catherine Deroche and Marylise Lebranchu), supported by other second-tier players who have rallied to their cause.

On the other hand, opponents admit that they had difficulty being heard: "We have been accused of being wicked, incapable of humanity and generosity. We have been subjected to insane pressure," explains Dominique Watrin, a communist senator (*L'Express Emploi*, April 30, 2014). Yet arguments are being made in the mainstream media. As reported in the *Huffington Post*, Roland Muzeau, spokesman for the Communist MPs warns for example that "the flaw in the existing system is that it does not sufficiently supplement the salary. Employers have to be involved. It is not fair to ask employees to share the difficulties among themselves" (25 January 2012).

The few political criticisms in the media have only been made in a limited period of time - only during discussions in the Assembly and Senate - and are often made by opposition dailies. The same communist senator, Roland Muzeau, stresses the inadequacies of the system voted:

"Today, the daily allowance for parental presence, provided for by the social security code, implies a loss of salary for parents forced to use it. It is this anomaly that must be put an end to, by obliging company managers to ensure that employees who are called upon to stay at the side of their seriously ill child maintain their income throughout the treatment" (L'Humanité, January 22, 2012).

Once the legislative text has been enacted, the majority of treatment granted is limited to the description of individual cases. This trend then translates into a greater distance from sources and partisan views on social issues: political stakeholders are rarely interviewed. Their presence is conditioned by an effective role in the legislative process (MP Paul Salen, Senator Catherine Deroche and the Minister of Public Service, Marylise Lebranchu). It is as if elected politicians were considered by the media to have little legitimacy to bring a critical political discourse on these issues into the public media space.

However, on a theoretical level, this observation is not without interest. It means that politicians, despite their knowledge of mechanisms for media promotion of societal facts and their positions as legislators, are not considered the most legitimate ones to deal with private and public labour relations. This is in spite of the principle that "journalists rather relay the interpretative frames of the most legitimate promoters of events, i.e. those with more power and symbolic resources" (Macé, 2005, 191). On the one hand, the legislative action of political leaders is proving to be indispensable in the media promotion of such cooperation. On the other hand, however, their points of view, explanations and arguments in support of these legislative actions are not considered indispensable in the discussions reported by the press.

However, this media underplaying of the political point of view on these wage cooperation actions does not only have the effect of excluding the political actors from these debates. It has the consequence of leaving the floor almost exclusively to those who are in favour of these laws. These frameworks underline the growing importance given to the human - and psychological - dimensions of such wage solidarity.

Why - as Table 2 shows - do donors and recipients of RTT donations benefit from a great deal of exposure to express themselves on such a subject? Why does their point of view as a parent of a sick child or as a colleague prevail? Simply because it is the employees who are at the forefront of this new kind of employee cooperation with a strong emotional component. The place given to their speeches stems from the fact that they have experienced the gift of RTT from the inside and that they maintain a close relationship with the person, or even, if need be, with the problem encountered here by a colleague. For the journalist interviewed, it is also an obligation to inform her readership about an initiative that was not well known at the time ("Otherwise people would wonder why it's not in the paper, why we're not here"). The following are now taken into account: the motivations of colleagues, the feelings of the children and parents benefiting from the initiative, the way in which these solidarity actions were launched (solidarity marches, drawings, etc.).

In such a way that these solidarity practices have an echo in the press that is both widespread and almost without discussion of their ideological premises (solidarity between colleagues versus social and family benefits; individual charity versus collective solidarity). This finding corroborates others. The media construction of multiple public issues takes the path of individualizing issues and problems. This is the case with regard to automobile behaviour (Gusfield, 1963), or health (Romeyer, 2007). Even if questions of road safety, the fight against cancer or the care of sick children put the emphasis on moral

and individual issues (paying attention to one's health, fighting against drinking and driving), regardless of any economic, cultural or social considerations (condition of vehicles, place given to preventive health care, etc.) that favour or facilitate these individual behaviours (Devillard and Marchetti, 2008, 161).

Conclusion

The construction of RTT's donation as a public issue has benefited from promotional actions and relays from multiple actors: beneficiaries, donor employees, political representatives, journalists... And yet, the media coverage of these wage cooperations between 2009 and 2015 has given this issue a simplistic version.

Indeed, the media frameworks reduce, over the years, the place given to discussions on the political and philosophical stakes of these actions in favour of the promotion of their individual and psychological dimensions. This mediatization then results in a rapid erasing of the stakes (political, philosophical, managerial) inherent to these new forms of cooperation in favour of human and social stakes.

Yet, chronologically, the political handling of this issue by a Member of Parliament has been essential. Singularly, and contrary to the order of stages described by Blumer, the phase of political reactions has largely preceded the phase of broad publicization and legitimization of this issue. This observation obliges - in this case - on the one hand to relativize (or to specify) the importance of a notion such as agenda setting, since - in this case - the media agenda followed the political agenda. On the other hand, it also obliges us to specify the importance of the notion of media framing. While journalists have remained dependent on their sources in the choice of this subject, their latitude - vis-à-vis the political authorities at least - remains tangible in the way they deal with it, given the amplification (Nollet, 2010) of employees' personal points of view to the detriment of more openly political considerations (Nollet, 2010).

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