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Occupational health and safety doctrine and service activity ; conceptualization, methodology and first result.

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Abstract : This paper presents a thesis in progress. This research work focuses on the frameworks of thought and action that structure prevention in France, described as the health and safety doctrine, and their relationship with service activities. It involves both a work of conceptualization of this doctrine, operated from the notion of social apparatus in Foucault's philosophy, and the construction of an original methodology to question it from the work activity. This text also develops some preliminary results to illustrate the contribution of the methodological choices made.

Keywords: occupational Health and safety ; service activity ; Foucault ; so-cial apparatus ; doctrine

This paper presents the thesis being carried out in France within the UMR 5600 (Environnement Ville Société) under the supervision of Valérie Pueyo. Begun on October 1st, 2019, this thesis is financed by the « Parcours Doctoral National en Santé Travail » coordinated by EHESP within the framework of the Plan Santé Travail 3. It is based on previous research work that has highlighted the existence of a "occupational health and safety doctrine" (Pueyo, Ruiz, Haettel, & Béguin, 2019). We will come back to this term in more details, its characterization being one of the objects of the research work, but it can be succinctly defined as a framework of thought and action that structures the prevention of occupational risks. The hypothesis put forward is also the birth of these predicates in the industrial world and their inadequacy with the new forms of work represented by service activities (ibid.). The central objective of the thesis is to deepen this hypothesis and to identify more precisely the points of dissonance between the occupational health and safety doctrine of prevention and service activities.

It is important to specify right away that this is the Francophone occupational health and safety doctrine. Therefore, we do not presume any value of universality. For this reason, we will not revisit its content, which has also been the subject of previous communications (Chambel, Béguin, & Pueyo, 2021; Chambel, Pueyo, & Béguin, 2020), but rather its treatment as a research subject, which may prove relevant to the international community. For it is not a question here of reflecting on the « *frame* » (Pueyo, 2020) represented by the occupational health and safety doctrine in disconnection from « *the substance* » (ibid.), which animates action, and more generally from activity. The originality of this work lies both in the way the prevention system is understood as a doctrine and the related conceptualization, but also in the link made with the work activity. The articulation between a conceptual object composed of elements of different scales (macro, meso, micro), the relatively vast perimeter of service activities and the reality of the situations experienced by the workers implies the development of an original methodology able of bringing these different dimensions into dialogue.

An initial conceptualization of the doctrine of prevention has been carried out; it can be assimilated to « *un dispositif* » (Foucault, 1977), a social apparatus. We will begin by developing in greater details this

central notion in this research work. This will allow us to present the methodology deployed before concluding with some preliminary results, as the fieldwork and data analysis is ongoing.

1. The health and safety doctrine: a social apparatus

In Foucault's philosophy, the concept of social apparatus is characterized both by what it is and by its function. It can be succinctly defined as a set of elements that make up a system and guide action.

1.1 The ontology of the social apparatus

The first characteristic of the elements of a social apparatus is their very great diversity. It can thus include « *discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic proposals, in short: what is said, as well as what is not said* » (Foucault, 1977). Thus, « *it can include virtually everything* » (Agamben, 2006). Elements as diverse as the concept of risk, personal protective equipment or the action plan represented by information and awareness can thus find their place in the system represented by the occupational health and safety doctrine.

The systemic, more structuring characteristic refers to a set of « *plays* », « *changes in position, modifications of functions, which can also be very different* » (Foucault, 1977). The social apparatus is then not the elements themselves, but the combinations of relations between them (Lafleur, 2015). These relations are marked by a certain form of instability, of movement, for example, « *a given discourse may appear sometimes as a program of an institution, sometimes on the contrary as an element that makes it possible to justify and mask a practice that remains silent, or to function as a second reinterpretation of that practice* » (Foucault, 1977). We will not go into more details here about these plays, which are extremely numerous within the doctrine, but perhaps the name "Health and Safety" already gives a clue to two conceptual fields that constitute, interfere with and influence each other.

1.2 The function of the social apparatus

The social apparatus is a « *formation, which, at a given historical moment, had the major function of responding to an emergency* » (Foucault, 1977). This functionalist dimension, this logic of orientation, inscribes the social apparatus in mechanisms of knowledge and power.

From the perspective of knowledge, it relies on certain types of knowledge and allows the production of certain others, in a form of self-feeding. For Vuillemin (2012), it is an « *operating table* », a form of reading grid. It gives a coherent orientation and cuts out a field, leaving by extension some elements in the shadow. Like the action of a prism on light, it decomposes reality into more or less elementary and interpretable units. But in doing so it gives a distorted, oriented and partial vision.

The link with power is reflected in its ability to guide action. Agamben (2006) speaks of « *docile enslavement* » and « *control without violence* ». For Lafleur (2015), the social apparatus is used to evaluate, measure and isolate in a logic of domination. More generally, it is part of disciplinary mechanisms (Foucault, 1975). This tendency to evaluation by measurement, to identify thresholds, to break down by risk or work unit in the doctrine of prevention echoes this logic of separation into elementary units, which can be dealt with by the fields of knowledge mobilized by the system.

« *That's the social apparatus : strategies of power relations supporting types of knowledge, and supported by them* » (Foucault, 1977)

The occupational health and safety doctrine of prevention emerged in the middle of the 19th century in response to the deteriorating health of the working populations. The system it represents was thus historically constructed and developed in response to a model of work organization and industrial production. By using this model as a social apparatus, it is possible to better characterize the elements that come into tension with the activity in the classes of service situations.

2. Re-examining the doctrine based on activity

In order to be in line with this logic of articulation of different dimensions and scale, of debating the doctrine with the reality of the activity, the production of knowledge about it is implemented by mobilizing approaches of analysis of real work. They are coupled with the concept of "classes of situations" from professional didactics in order to allow a categorization of situations based on the organization of the action and not on the productive system.

Professional didactics is particularly interested in the relationship between knowledge and action. In this paradigm, the worker carries out a work of conceptualization in action. This conceptualization mobilizes so-called pragmatic concepts (Samurçay & Pastré, 1995) in that they differ from other types of concepts by their finalized properties (Vidal-Gomel & Rogalski, 2007). This mechanism is carried out by and for action based on indicators linked to the situation, information that the worker takes from his/her situation. These indicators can be of an extremely diverse nature. They may be related to the physical environment, interaction with a user or other workers, work organisation, etc. Based on this conceptualization, the worker will deploy « *schemes* », a relatively stabilized organization of action while benefiting from a certain flexibility to adjust to the variability of reality. The major interest of this theory for our object and the link with the situation classes, since, as Pastré (2011), points out, the same scheme corresponds to one and only one situation class. By thus identifying the conceptual structure of the situation (made up of pragmatic concepts and indicators) and the different schemes deployed, it is possible to categorize situations and identify the related prevention needs. It also makes it possible to identify points of similarity or difference between service activities that at first glance

For this research is also based on a comparative methodology, particularly adapted to apprehend global phenomena from singular situations (Plutniak & Kikuchi, 2017). This comparison is carried out using several materials. The preferred means, when possible, is the inclusion of prevention actors in the conduct of « *prevention projects* » (Judon, 2017) within structures. These prevention projects are characterised by the mobilisation of "intermediate prevention objects" (ibid.). We prefer the term prevention « *boundary objects* » (Star, 2010; Star & Griesemer, 1989) to this term because of their major characteristic: interpretative flexibility. Indeed, they must allow all the actors involved, workers and prevention workers alike, to express their points of view and representations of the situation, even though all these actors belong to different "professional worlds" (Béguin, 2004).

The second method used, when it is not possible to directly integrate prevention workers into projects, is to carry out interviews with prevention actors from these same projects. The aim here is to gather their points of view *a posteriori*.

3. First prevention project: prevention health and safety doctrine and workspace

A first prevention project is being carried out with social mediators. Social mediation can be defined as an activity of intermediary between users and public and private services with a view to repairing the social link. The activity is marked by a great variability, particularly because of the extremely vast perimeter covered by the work of mediation.

The organization of the association is divided into two relatively hermetic types of activities. One is oriented towards the reception of the public with a distribution by site. The other represents what the association calls the field activity and which consists in going to meet the users, on mission of the public or private services. This meeting can be carried out in a physical way, or by telephone. The call of the users by the mediators of the field team is called phoning and represents for them a full-fledged activity, about one day per week.

The project of prevention covers several axes and all the activities, we will present here only one of the elements of the project, the action on the spaces for the activity of phoning. Indeed, the structure is currently undergoing a project to move one of the sites, this move project inducing to rethink the phoning space. 10h30 of observations have been carried out specifically on this activity, in a position of co-production with the mediators of a knowledge on their activity. One of the major elements identified during the observations is in the collective dimensions. Contrary to the common representation, the activity of the other mediators also in phoning activity is not only a hindrance linked to the co-activity, quite the contrary. During phoning, the mediators listen to what the other mediators are doing during waiting or reporting times on the software. This listening allows the development of skills, but also to break the boredom that the phoning activity can generate from time to time. Exchanges are also regularly set up, to share information on certain cases or, there again, simply to limit boredom. Collaborative situations can even be set up when a user does not speak French and a mediator helps his colleague to continue the mediation in English. Far from being anecdotal, all of these collective dimensions are essential to the health of mediators, whether they are skills development, collective development or strategies for managing boredom.

This knowledge produced then allowed the realization of a working group with 4 mediators, the technical referent, the team leader, the occupational health nurse and the occupational health physician in charge of the structure. A volumetric model was chosen as a prevention boundary object (fig 1). Particular attention was paid to certain characteristics: it was to enable the perspective of those involved in prevention to be expressed (identification of the position of the windows and the orientation of the buildings, position of the electrical sockets, etc.).



Fig 1 : Prevention boundary object representing the final solution chosen by all participants

The analysis of the data is still in progress at the time of writing, but it is already possible to indicate that prevention actors are mainly focusing their discourse on certain specific points. All of these elements are part of an environmental modeling of risk. In the foreground is the question of ambiances, both visual and auditory, from the angle of the discomfort that can be caused by bad lighting or general noise. The ground-level fall was also a point of vigilance, reflected in concrete terms by a reflection on circulatory flows with regard to the positions of substations and electrical wires. The chemical risk was also evoked through the printer and the potential toxic emissions linked to its use. The collective dimensions were more generally understood by the prevention specialists from the perspective of co-activity and per workstation. The surface area per workstation was also a point of vigilance, potentially echoing the minimum space standards per tertiary workstation.

These different dimensions were partly in tension with the needs expressed by the mediators. The mediators, while not neglecting the negative impact of co-activity, wanted to preserve the collective dimensions. Placing the offices facing the walls was thus quickly discarded. The partition envisaged to separate the position of the technical referent from that of the mediators never found its place, as the exchanges between these positions are essential to the activity. Elements related to the purpose of the action were also debated, such as the necessary proximity of a shelf or the printer.

The confrontation of these different positions via the mobilization of a boundary object nevertheless makes it possible to arrive at a satisfactory solution (fig. 1), both from the perspective of the occupational health nurse and the occupational physician, but also from that of all the workers in the structure.

Conclusion

These initial results confirm the interest of the methodology and the conceptual framework to allow the articulation of both the activity and the prevention actors' viewpoints. From this, it is then possible to identify the points of tension between the doctrine and the service activity under study from the points of debate between the actors.

However, working through the activity of prevention workers in the framework of prevention projects also makes it possible to identify the singular recompositions of the prevention doctrine and its implementation by prevention professionals. The appropriation of the action plans proposed by the doctrine by those involved in prevention is both a point of interest and also a point of vigilance. It will be necessary, within the framework of the study, to diversify the prevention specialists participating in the projects in order to be able to differentiate between what comes under the doctrine of prevention and what depends on singular modes of action, always in this comparative perspective of identifying certain forms of invariants.

On this point, a variable on the experience of prevention workers could be included in the study. Indeed, we hypothesize that the ability to re-examine the doctrine of prevention could be a skill developed through the practice of the profession of prevention.

Moreover, while these preliminary results are far from being the only ones to be part of this dynamic, they are encouraging in demonstrating the ability of the ergonomics of the activity to deal with larger dimensions and to go beyond its traditional perimeter, that of the workstation and the work system exclusively.

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