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**Self-description and phatic function in organisation culture:
the case of Ouishare**

Master's Thesis

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I have written the Master's Thesis myself, independently. All of the other authors' texts, main viewpoints and all data from other resources have been referred to.

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Introduction

“[F]or Lotman, the ability to deliberately distance oneself to the ‘periphery’, where self-reflexivity is put into dialogue with the Other, enables the achievement of an estranged perspective that, in turn, represents the possibility of an unpredictable, innovative and, most importantly, free action, that enables and empowers the individual—the ‘Creative personality’.”
(Ibrus & Torop 2015: 5, see also Mandelker 2006)

Recent approaches in organisational behaviour have made an increasing effort to understand dynamic phenomena in work settings, such as processes of self-regulation, the role of emotions, employee well-being and integration problems (Wang, Zhou, & Zhang 2016). Most of them still depart from structuralist and computational terminology, working through detailed observation data toward models for simulation. Studies of similar topics have been typically carried out in the fields of sociology, business management, organisational behaviour and psychology. On the other hand, organisational culture studies usually take the anthropological approach, focusing on analysing norms, values, rites and traditions in a given organisation. Figuratively, the behavioural approaches describe organisations in a static metalanguage in an attempt to formulate a system, and cultural approach addresses the dynamic elements but nevertheless lacks understanding of the organisation as a whole.

The tension between the structuralist and dynamic views has also been articulated in concerns over the dominance of quantitative methods in organisational studies (Van Maanen 1979a, 1979b). Undoubtedly there are benefits to both types of approaches, but as the analyses focusing on dynamic and qualitative aspects seem to be few or lacking, it is a great opportunity to contribute in this area, and offer a fresh and a balancing viewpoint.

This study aims to take a step toward offering a semiotic approach to organisations as holistic, dynamic entities. The semiotic models enable generalising and modelling dynamics in culture without the need to record data on each element separately. This work will construct tools for a more integrated outlook on organisations, grounded in the Tartu-Moscow

school of cultural semiotics, notably Yuri Lotman's concepts of **self-description** and **semiosphere** (Lotman 2001, 2005, 2009). I will apply these models in my study of Ouishare, an international network that somewhat challenges the typical organisational models. Ouishare is an international entity which, in the latest edition of its website, is defined no further than "an experiment and quest to do more meaningful work and challenge the status quo"¹. As a group with highly informal culture and undefined work roles, it resembles the hybrid organisations of our times, as well as groups that combine volunteer and paid positions in their daily work. Such different levels of engagement call for respective communication and management patterns to ensure the successful integration of every member. Ouishare is an interesting object because it is quite open, and was also accessible due to my prior involvement with the organisation. I will observe how members of Ouishare construct their personal and collective identities in relation to the group and the outside ("other"). To embed the results in the wider context of societal and technological development, I am placing them in dialogue with Andreas Wittel's perspective on **network sociality** (Wittel 2001).

In essence, I will observe self-description as a stabilizing mechanism for collective identity in turbulent times such as contemporary fast-paced information-based society, and semiosphere as a spatial organiser for disembodied elements such as values and aspects of identity. In my case study, these two models offer value as a way of internal re-ordering in the state of explosion and unpredictability, which in this specific organisation is perceived as a cultural norm. Additionally, these semiotic tools could be employed as visualising and organising mechanisms of immaterial aspects of culture in any organisation, both internally and externally.

Ouishare is represented in 20 countries by 80 active members called Connectors. In the light of the globally uniformed frame, its members call Ouishare a network, a community, an organisation, as well as many other titles. Relying on the results from 17 semi-structured interviews, I will study the signifiers employed by the members of the organisation in constructing their collective identity. Further attention will be drawn on the topics of "self" and "other"—the latter is often constructed as *traditional*, while the identity of Ouishare itself inhabits the space of innovation and experimentation.

Drawing on the theories and interview results, I will also propose a self-description consisting of a set of binaries or scales (trust, flexibility, unpredictability resilience, curiosity,

¹ <https://www.ouishare.net/our-dna> The thoroughly renewed ouishare.net was launched on April 18, 2018.

and affect) that may help navigate the immaterial space of Ouishare. They are by no means absolute but give a clearer view of certain characteristics described as more appropriate for or present in the people perceived as active, well integrated, and successful in the community. These scales form an ideal self-description for Ouishare, disposed toward being figuratively “the big five” personality traits necessary for a cultural fit with the organisation. The general method for achieving this model of self-description, with or without the Ouishare-specific traits, remains applicable to other organisations. Individual’s placement within the modelled spectrum remains open to change and movement. It leaves space for self-reflection, agency and empowerment, and gives the individual an opportunity to position oneself in the context of collective identity without the restrictions of a static structure.

Considering that digitally mediated working environment and everyday use of online communication tools form an important part of Ouishare self-description, I will also take a look at the **phatic function** (Jakobson 1960, Malinowski 1923) in these environments (phatic technologies, see Wang et al. 2012, 2016). Based on a specific block of interview questions, I will analyse the perceived meaning and use of non-verbal signs (emoji and images), a practice which is considered as a cultural norm in Ouishare.

Phatic dominant becomes visible in network sociality, in environments designed to thrive on maintaining relationships. Phatic technologies are well suited for relationship management, enabling less invasive ways of keeping in touch in the sense that they offer options for less demanding communication, and their asynchronous nature allows the recipient to choose, to a certain extent, the time and place of receiving (viewing) the message. While keeping up with information is hard or nearly impossible due to the constant flux and overload, it inevitably takes a secondary place after the phatic dominant. As for the semiospheric centre-periphery dynamics, people feeling more at ease with the digitally mediated phatic may be better positioned in networked sociality. In digitally mediated environments, phatic is perfectly content in being directed simultaneously at everyone and no-one in particular, and it enables associating meaning to reaction and non-reaction likewise.

The overall objective is to demonstrate the possibility of using semiotic models (semiosphere and self-description) in organisational research, as well as for organisational culture management. More specifically, my research questions can be divided in the following way.

1. How are collective identity and shared self-description constructed in Ouishare, an organisation that offers a quite vague and general public definition of itself?
2. Ouishare self-model is often described as different from or opposing to the more “traditional” organisational cultures. What is constructed as “traditional” in Ouishare internal discourse?
3. How are phatic technologies used to establish and maintain relationships and team feeling between a group of people who rarely, if ever meet face-to-face?
 - a. How are digitally mediated non-verbal signs used in organisational communication?
4. What is the perceived meaning of messages with phatic dominant in digitally mediated communication?

The thesis is divided into theory and content parts. Chapter One gives an overview of organisational culture and organisations have been studied so far, and the role of semiotics in such studies. Chapter Two addresses the main notions and theoretical frameworks, divided in three focal directions. Network sociality serves as a wider societal base for my study. On top of this as a background, I am building my analysis of Ouishare culture and internal communication, focusing on two directions. Firstly, Lotman’s models of self-description and semiosphere offer ways to conceptualise the dynamics within the structure. Secondly, looking at the phatic dominant in digitally mediated communications helps explain the efficacy of location-independent organising and building a sense of community at a distance. Overall, the chapter offers an innovative theoretical framework for understanding self-description and phatic technologies as central to the identity formation of an informal organisation in our times. The framework will be applicable to the informal levels of other kinds of organisations as well.

Chapter Three describes the method of my study—semi-structured interviews, how I coded and analysed them. Chapter Four is dedicated to the analysis guided by the theoretical focus (self-description, semiosphere, phatic function as models, and network sociality as underlying environment). It also describes the “Ouishare dominants” that emerged while coding my interview results.

1. Historiographies

Why is a more dynamic approach necessary for the study of organisations? For instance, Greenwood argues vehemently against Tayloristic determinism in the academic institutions, especially in the fields of social sciences and humanities. “Taylorism as a worldview” promises economical sublime and success by running an organisation as an efficient machine, but fails to disclose the inevitable subjectivity present in the choices of models and symbols employed (Greenwood 2013: 46). He sees the inherent organisational structuralism being responsible for delimiting and determining the research objects and interpretations in the field of anthropology, as well as in science generally (ibid). Alternatively, an organisation such as Ouishare that refuses crystallised hierarchy at its core, seems to offer more freedom and liberty of choice. De-formalisation of structures certainly comes at a cost, especially from financial and managerial perspectives that need to continuously adapt to a different and changing order. However, as also indicated by Greenwood, even Tayloristic approach does not always yield satisfactory results nor guarantee organisational success. It is simply a comfortable pattern to settle in, thus perhaps serving more the cognitive comfort of the managing *Homo sapiens* than an adequately predictive model of successful group behaviour.

1.1 Organisational culture: static, dynamic, and integrated approach

In this work, I am using the terms **organisational culture** and **organisation** somewhat synonymously, the reason being that in a highly dynamic context the difference between the two becomes decidedly less pronounced. In an organisation without formalised internal hierarchy, clear engagement levels and work processes one is left wondering whether there is anything additional that could be called ‘organisation’ that is not included in the notion of

culture. In the case of Ouishare, the cultural dynamics, especially its immaterial aspects are conspicuous to the extent that they overshadow other, more formal aspects. Additionally, in the ‘official’ collective “Permanent Beta” self-description, the Ouishare Handbook, “cultural fit with the team” is named, among other things, as a requirement to qualify for the inner Connectors circle². However, there is no definite description of what the “cultural fit” implies, and it is very likely impossible, perhaps even unreasonable to write it down to begin with, due to it being dependent on the specific team, their cultural background and personalities, as well as the fast changes in team composition, projects and community in general.

Sociologist Calvin Morrill (2008) gives a thorough overview of the development of the studies in **organisational culture**. In the study of organisations so far, the Taylorian³ approach is aimed at maximal rationalisation of the relationships and work processes, so as to make an organisation function efficiently as a machine, increasing productivity and control (Morrill 2008: 17). Later, the symbolic interactionism of the Chicago school inspires the research in informal parts of the structure. Combined with Goffman’s dramaturgical view, it somewhat challenges the idea of organisations as static and rational enterprises (Morrill 2008: 22). It is only in the late 20th century that the study of culture explicitly enters into the organisational domain, with organisations being now considered as “socially constructed systems of meaning” (Morrill 2008: 23; see also Barley & Kunda 1992, Barley 1983). There is a clear parallel to the concept of the social construction of reality (and therefore, institutions) as reflected upon by Berger & Luckmann (1966).

Nevertheless, the goal for the cultural approach in this era remains mostly in capturing “organisational dynamics ignored by mainstream organisation theory”. At the same time, the neo-institutional approach emerges, drawing on the non-rational aspects of organisations such as ritual, myth, and symbol, in order to understand how the myth of rationality instead furthers cultural and social construction and therefore legitimisation of certain kind of (static, rational) structures. (Morrill 2008: 24–25).

Morrill also raises the question of **organisational boundaries**, affected by the emergence of network structures and asynchronous communication technologies, increasing mobility and

² <https://handbook.ouishare.net/guides-and-toolkits/become-a-connector>

³ Frederick Winslow Taylor was one of the first management professionals to take a scientific and systemic approach to workplace settings. His book “The Principles of Scientific Management” (1911), carrying the ideas of worker-management divide, enforced standardisation and detailed task regulations, revolutionised the production industry for decades.

globalization: the blurring boundaries of work and private life challenge the idea of organisations as “fixed, discrete units” (2008: 32). Here Lotman’s approach to semiospheric boundaries as a means for interaction and translation, as well as Wittel’s concept of network sociality can make significant contributions to understanding the new technology-enhanced organisational trends.

Passion and emotion breaching the traditionally unemotional professional spheres is a relatively new subject in the organisational context. For instance, Janell Bauer and Margaret Murray (2018) have studied emotion at work in the context of bereavement, and point out literature on emotion management and emotion labour (Bauer & Murray 2018: 62). Also, affect is becoming more into focus in the networked publics (see Papacharissi 2015) and the emotion-driven post-truth era. In the first place, emotions are becoming more acceptable in the contexts they were previously discouraged. On the other end, now liberated, they are also crossing over to be commodified, against what Mestrovic (1997) calls **post-emotional society**—a societal background that lifts emotion out of its habitual context and meaning, turning it into a tool for manipulating the perception of self in the global media arena. (Miller 2008: 389, Mestrovic 1997) Emotions are becoming both more visible and detached in the online proliferation of emoji—predominantly phatic pictorial signs. These are used on social networking platforms initially inhabiting the sphere of private life but are now becoming increasingly popular on digital collaboration tools designed principally for work—team communication and organisational workflow management.

1.2 Models of organisations

When addressing models, my aim is not a maximally realistic description. It is more of an interest in what kind of aspects become visible in an object when using one model or another for its observation. Besides, models—here, organisational models, in the context of business-oriented communication—serve as handy metaphors to facilitate understanding (or the mental mapping of) what a person may expect from the organisation. In the lack of a formal structure, one would turn to the cultural features as to nevertheless recognise some initial cues and norms of behaviour, to be able to “tune in”, or simply assign a common language (context, terminology) to the instance of communication. The example of Ouishare

and similarly unstructured groups shows that typical ideas or models of organisations (mostly denoting hierarchy and firm structure) fail to provide sufficient common ground for an initial understanding. Therefore am looking at some less typical models for organisations in management studies, to demonstrate that there are several attempts to describe a more dynamic structure. It also serves as an approximate contextualisation for a reader with a non-semiotic background.

One such example is the model of **adhocracy**, offered by Henry Mintzberg (1979), or **innovative organisation** (in Mintzberg 1989). It is characterised by dynamicity, uniqueness of outputs, multidisciplinary and expert-based teams, matrix structure (as opposed to hierarchy), unpredictability and complexity of work processes, encouraged semi-formality, and (selective) decentralisation “seems to be the structure of the industries of *our* age” (Mintzberg & McHugh 1985: 161). It is interesting to note here that already before Wittel’s conception of networked sociality paradigm (Wittel 2001), Mintzberg sees dynamic *ad hoc* structures emerging in contemporary organisations as a response and adaptation to the growing importance of the information society. Described still in terms of structuralist organisational science, adhocracy nevertheless possesses elements of the networked sociality: unpredictability, change, and dynamics. Elsewhere, Mintzberg et al. (1996) stress the need for dynamics in organisations for the reason of avoiding stale in collaboration and the state where a crystallised team “becomes inclined to see only the virtue and superiority of its own ideas.” To serve work efficacy, the makeup of teams needs to change at times, and the hard combinations of clashing views in teams should not be avoided (Mintzberg et al. 1996: 68).

In another alternative model, the **learning organisation** coined by systems scientist Peter Senge, there is a descriptive shift from resource-based towards knowledge-based organisation management (Senge 1993: 9). With its focus on systemic thinking, collaborative vision building, support to employee empowerment and distributed decision-making, it tends to fit into the information-based larger society dynamics framework of sociologist Scott Lash (2002). Senge’s model has not remained without criticism. Michael Fielding (2001) points out that Senge adds a humanistic dimension to organisation management, and places the notion of community in the heart of the learning organisation, as “it is only in community that the synergy of significance and belonging creates the freedom for us to be in ways which are adventurous and challenging.” (Fielding 2011: 19) Nevertheless, Fielding reprimands Senge’s model for lacking social and philosophical placement, as well as a consistent philosophy of

work. In an organisational context, it does not reveal or explain power relations and is over-reliant on the expected level of dialogue. Its desire for employee ('people') commitment and organisational transformation borders on totalitarianism. More importantly, the use of community notion carries the danger of masking oppression and exploitation in the language of meaning and belonging (Fielding 2001: 21).

1.3 Semiotics and the study of organisations

In management studies, the anthropology-based approaches of organisational symbolism have looked to reveal the underlying ideologies and value systems by studying the aspects of culture, such as stories, myths, ceremonies, rituals, visual aspects (logos) and anecdotes in organisations (e.g. Dandridge et al. 1980). More recently, the concept of organisational space has captured interest in both business- and geography-related fields (see Weinfurter & Seidl 2018 for an overview).

Of explicitly semiotic approaches used in the study of organisational culture, one of the most cited remains Barley (1983) who develops a model based on Q-study methodology to prioritise subjective meanings associated to elements in organisational culture. His model has found the further application (e.g. Chai-Arayalert & Nakata 2013) and is often cited, for example by Gagliardi (2017) who observes the role of artefacts in organisational culture. In general, semiotic approaches are not often explicitly used in the study of organisations, and there does not seem to be any novel contributions in this area. Gagliardi remarks upon its lack of popularity as semiotics being "a copy of linguistic knowledge which has been very timidly applied to non-linguistic objects" (Gagliardi 2017: 29). Another example of the linguistic-semiotic approach is the study of categories and labels as a means for structuring and prototyping in the organisational setting (Ashforth & Humphrey 1997).

There is also the field of **organisational semiotics**, championed by computer scientists Ronald Stamper, Henk Gazendam and Kecheng Liu. This approach conceives of organisations based on the use of "sign-based artefacts" of all sorts, where "media are analyzed semiotically into the smallest components and operations" (Gazendam 2004: 1). Rooted in the contributions of systems analyst Ronald Stamper (1973, 1999), and influenced by Peirce and Morris, it structures organisations as information systems, employing the aid of

semiotic notions such as Umwelt or metaphors to map out interaction patterns of for instance work practices, paths in time and space, iterations in language use, transactions, or social norms (Gazendam 1999: 5–6). The field is mostly concerned with developing an ontology exhaustive enough for classifying all kinds of signifieds such as sign, biscuits, people who eat them, and biscuit-selling contracts; also past events (“things that no longer exist”) and future plans (things that “may never exist”) (Stamper 1999: 139) with an explicit aim to develop “a format to describe social norms in a precise way so that they can be used in the development of information systems.” (Gazendam & Liu 2003: 6)

Such an approach is definitely applicable in analysing highly static and controlled structures such as the military; programming the LAWs (lethal autonomous weapons) or Artificial Intelligence systems that have a complex but limited possibility of actions and agents. It can have further use in data semantics, as indicated by Gazendam & Liu (2003: 3). Overall, it remains a structuralist approach, and more suitable in the virtualisation of industrial production lines, machine learning or data science, but it is of little help in understanding the non-rational meaning-making within a complex human group.

Systems thinking is valuable in organisational context either as a metaphor for “holistic knowledge” and “collective intelligence” (which, in turn, are metaphors themselves), or on a mathematical-systemic level to provide generalisations and predictions system-wide, but it does not help in predicting behaviour on an individual level. Such an approach is reasonable only when the roles and relations described are relatively static or changing at a slow pace, requiring the re-calculation of the structure at times:

[O]rganisation exists as a semiotic tool, insofar as it structures the environment and the actions of those who use it, that is, of those involved in the organisation in one way or another. As a semiotic entity, an organisation may need some restructuring now and then, to adapt it to changing circumstances. (Van Heusden & Jorna 2002: 154)

However, in a highly dynamic context with roles, actors and relationships changing all the time, a different categorization is needed that allows for dynamicity on other levels.

In general, organisational semiotics attempts to detail work processes with a possible objective of replicating, applying and/or automatizing a relatively Taylorian structure in the digital sphere.

In a study of Tartu-Moscow school of semiotics, Anti Randviir (2007) points out that the study of sociocultural matters so far often brings about a choice between analysing either processes or structures, but not both. Here the spatial metaphors and models offered by the

semiotics of culture provide interesting tools for synthesizing the functionalist-processual and structuralist approach (Randviir 2007: 138).

The main value of the cultural-semiotic approach in studying organisations is allowing for complete distancing from the behavioural and management approach. The latter is still stranded in Taylorian metalanguage, inadvertently contributing to its power in either endorsement or critique. The tools provided by the semiotics of culture provide more suitable models for a holistic analysis, being also helpful in framing both the static and dynamic aspects of an organisation workflow, and offering additional levels of analysability (see also Torop 2015). Most importantly, they provide means for organising the self-descriptive metalanguage, which in itself is beneficial for understanding and managing organisational culture from both inside and outside.

2. Semiotic metalanguage for analysing organisations in network sociality

First I will elaborate on the wider sociological framework of **network sociality** as explained by Andreas Wittel. Later, I will explain the main used notions, beginning with Yuri Lotman's concepts of **self-description** and **semiosphere**, followed by an overview of the **phatic** as introduced by Bronislaw Malinowski and Roman Jakobson, and its child concepts related to contemporary technologies (as used by V. Wang, Radovanovic & Ragnedda, Porter). Self-description and semiosphere allow for mapping the immaterial space and for internal ordering for an organisation or a culture group. Network sociality and related concepts provide wider context for the new forms of socialising related to digitally mediated communication. Eventually, phatic function helps explain how the online platforms are able to facilitate relationships between people lacking face-to-face contact.

2.1 Network sociality as a wider framework for sociocultural context

Andreas Wittel (2001) contrasts the concept of **network sociality** with the notion of community. Community connotes stability, coherence, embeddedness, belonging, strong and long-lasting social bonds based on mutual experience or common history, and the separation of work and play. Network sociality shifts us toward individualization, the temporality of standards and protocols, the ephemerality of social bonds, assimilation of work and play, and the commodification of social relations based on an exchange of data or 'catching up' (Wittel 2001: 51). These are all features that play into the current trends of organisational culture and management.

Wittel goes on to observe the features of network sociality under 5 larger categories: individualization, ephemeral and intense relations, shift from narrative to information,

assimilation of play and work, and technology (2001: 65–71), arguing for the rise of networking practices as “paradigmatic of the information society more broadly”, as well as for their historical, geographical and social embeddedness. However, he notes that the rise of network sociality is new with regard to its formalization and institutionalization and the commodification of social relationships; as well as that it is more visible in urban spaces and among “*the new middle class* of culturally educated and media- and computer-literate people” (Wittel 2001: 52–53, original emphasis). At the heart of network sociality there are **commodified relationships**—perpetually produced, reproduced and consumed social bonds (Wittel 2001: 72). This also translates into the culture of **ephemeral exchanges**—the habit of ‘catching up’ every now and then, without an explicit project or task meeting, rather just for an informal meeting (lunch or drinks) to swap the latest news. Bauman characterises this as commitment “until further notice” (Bauman 1996: 51, Wittel 2001), and this applies to the relationships of people to projects (work contracts), to the organisation in general, and also to ideas—the ephemerality of interest applied to “things” as immaterial objects and processes.

Wittel’s **individualization** entails the temporality of standards, the perpetual reconstruction of social bonds, blurring boundaries between close and distant relationships. An individual’s identity in network sociality depends “on awareness of the relations with the others”, the proliferation of knowledge workers with “nomadic CV-s”, and the nature of sociality being at once distant and immediate (Wittel 2001: 65). The nomadism refers to both geographical and mental movement: network sociality comes with location-independent work, as well as the need for workers (rather, freelancers) to become “nomadic” across multiple job domains and skill-sets. The blurring of boundaries between work and private life (**assimilation of work and play**)—friends, colleagues, partners, and clients, is again clearly visible in Ouishare culture. It can be perceived as a freedom, but comes at a price: unlike in a traditional working environment of a day job or work in shifts that precisely limits when and where the employee needs to be present, one is required to define those boundaries on their own. Furthermore, with the different levels of involvement in the wider network, such as being employed in a project within Ouishare, being a volunteer Connector or integrating member (with a day job aside), or being a volunteer in an event such as Ouishare Fest, the available moments of suitable “Ouishare time” for any given individual can indeed vary from “normal working hours” (however these are defined) to evenings and weekends next to one’s primary obligations. Therefore, it can lead to difficulties in time planning or adequate

calculation of one's contribution intensity—one has to decide whether to check the channels constantly, or take some time “off work”, and feel as if they were not participating in the information flow as expected.

One of the most significant aspects of network sociality for Wittel is the shift **from narrative to information**. In his understanding of information, Wittel relies on fellow sociologist Scott Lash (2002) in that it reduces its objects to basic elements of data, thus stripping the subjects of the possibility of shared experience (narrative) (Wittel 2001: 67). Information is related to the databases of Lev Manovich (2001), to the post-structuralist approach of Mark Poster (1995) of databases as discourse and panopticon, as well as to Zygmunt Bauman's (1998) database as “an instrument of separation, selection and exclusion” (Wittel 2001: 60).

In the theory of new media, the advancement of digital culture has introduced a “new form of cultural expression”—**database** as a collection “of individual items, where every item has the same significance as any other”, opposing and replacing narrative as the previous norm (Manovich 1999: 82). While narrative presents an illusion of linear sequence, cause and effect, the database lays out all the elements without indicating the relationships between them, leaving it open to each user to construct their own narrative.

The database-like nature of Ouishare culture is apparent in the multitude of digital repositories of information and conversation snippets. There are files and documents in Google Drive, chronologically saved group chats in Telegram and Slack, perhaps some task layouts and general planning in Trello (the project management tool). Even if organised thematically, these elements are still separated from their eventual sequences and general context. For someone outside of the immediate project team, they form disconnected islands of information units, almost impossible to reconstruct into a coherent narrative. As such, they mean little without the people involved who can present them as a narrative again. Holding the memory of the sequence also entails power for those who can put the data back together as a meaningful story, and communicate it to others. Hence, the members with longer involvement, memory, and self-reflection skills become as if the bards of new media culture, having the ability and knowledge to perform ballads about the past days, as well as the present order.

2.1.1 Community as a constructed identity for common goals

Every organisation forms a community to a certain extent. After all, it is made up of people who are spending significant amounts of time working or volunteering together. In a typical nine-to-five job, a person spends half of their active (waking) time at work. In all kinds of organisations, people are encouraged to participate in activities not directly related to their work tasks, such as team building and motivational events designed to foster more personal connections. Events related to organisational culture, identity, and common rituals also build a sense of community. Hybrid and volunteer organisations such as Ouishare, on the other hand, are explicitly constructed on the idea of community before anything else. The people of a community share certain self-descriptive universals enabling them to act together as a group. Thus, participating in any kind of organisation, paid or volunteer, can make up a large part of a person's self-description and identity.

Political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson conceives of a nation to be an **imagined community**—“*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 2006: 6). Just as Javanese villagers, so do Ouishareans (or members of any global, digitally mediated organisation, for that matter) know that “they are connected to people they have never seen” (ibid).

The metaphor of **virtual community**, according to sociologist Vincent Mosco (2004), “imagines the development of a genuine social experience on the net, bringing people together to share their lives and build a sense of place and community. The metaphor suggests that one can change electronically and connect people emotionally as well as cognitively.” (Mosco 2004: 52) Elsewhere, media researcher Malcolm Parks (2011) studies social networking sites such as Myspace or Facebook as settings that function as social venues, interested in the conditions necessary for the formation of [virtual] communities within them. He is convinced in the influence that community as a metaphor has in the conceptualisation of the social Internet (Parks 2011: 105). Parks gives a historical overview of the concept of community, pointing out how its reference has evolved from a geographically placed entity to a displaced one, a “weak” sense of the term where community is viewed as a culture or a set of shared ideas, and **virtual communities** “as social groups that display the psychological and cultural qualities of strong community without physical proximity” (Parks 2011: 107).

Wang & Tucker point out the similarity between online and offline groups, in that “cybercommunities are networks of informational and emotional exchange, and channels for establishing, building and maintaining social capital” just like offline communities (2016: 145). For Wittel, the idea of community as the opposite of network entails stability, belonging, and lasting relationships (2001: 51), providing refuge from the temporality and ephemerality of the digital, networking world.

In this thesis, I define community as any group of otherwise unrelated individuals sharing common interests and working toward some common goals, a goal being a project or a wish to spend enjoyable time together. In the course of this work, the notions of **community**, **organisation** and **network** will be used somewhat synonymously, based on their denotative interchangeability in the discourse of Ouishare self-descriptions.

2.1.2 Information as the locus of power

Wittel (2001) is in a dialogue with the sociological concept of information developed by Scott Lash (2002, 2007). According to Lash, in the global information society as an order of immanence, domination happens through **communication** that is among us, making it immediate, unreflective, and preceding discursive legitimation. In the context of cyberspace (digital communication channels), legitimation through performance becomes non-hegemonic, and by being “no longer separate from what it is meant to legitimate, it becomes automatic.” (Lash 2007: 66) In an organisation thriving on digitally mediated communication such as Ouishare, it is no longer possible to practice or pre-validate one’s messages before sending them—when out, it is public, at least within the community, and by virtue of documentation and archiving practices, present and visible forever.

The perceived importance of and focus on values in Ouishare compares to the concept of **disorganization** of Scott Lash, that I am describing in this chapter because of its connection to the era of networks, information and digital communication rather than management studies. Disorganizations are fluid, rhizomatic entities united by their values (or by virtue of *having* values), as opposed to the focus on norms in (traditional) organisations. They are reflexive communities that “practice chronic value heterodoxy”. Unlike the procedural, unquestioning approach to the values in organisations, disorganizations “subscribe to their

values, but recognize that they are one finite set of values alongside those of the values of many other communities” (Lash 2002: 41). This also describes all groups based on voluntary activism—united by their aspirations for a more inclusive society, better nature conservation or animal rights. Even if their priorities differ from each other or within the group, they are still able to work together to achieve common goals related to their values.

Lash’s disorganizations also include misfit groups, such as sects, gangs and criminal networks. They operate out of “symbolic violence” and “economy of affect” (2002: 44–46). Affect is a well recognisable feature of Ouishare, and many organisations underline the “passion” in their work, volunteer or not. Violence is decidedly less recognisable in the context of Ouishare where most people are said to be nice (amazing, smart, respectful, etc.) and anyone barely mentions anything truly negative about the whole experience. It may be that against the background of joyful celebration, the negative impressions are internalised and not blamed on the framework, because it is invisible. It is as if the lack of a structure of the traditional organisation that is supposed to carry and buffer the volatility and unpredictability of the external environment is, instead of providing for more freedom and liberty, also affording for violence to emerge and go unchecked.

In the “information order”, as Lash calls it (in 2002: 218), the indicator of power would be absolute access to information, but not only. *Understanding*, making sense of, making the meaning out of the available information is the crucial part, both from the internal and the external perspective. Even if constantly online and following the flow, there are always some parts of the semiosphere one cannot access or comprehend as an individual. It is only the system or the database that “knows” the totality of information inside it. But then it does not “know” really anything at all, because the system is not capable of knowing. All it can do is to display snippets of information upon request. And as the process of understanding cannot be downloaded off the human mind or outsourced to a documentation system, the methods of making meaning in an organisation will always remain its semiotic bottlenecks.

2.1.3 Structure of social relationships in the network

Next to Wittel’s network sociality concept, it is also interesting to look at the mathematical model of **scale-free networks** by Albert-László Barabási (2002, 2011), and see

what it could contribute to the understanding of organised human groups such as organisations, communities and social networks. The mathematical model explains social networks in terms of nodes (individuals) and links (relationships of exchange and/or communication) (Barabási 2011:1).

Barabási's model is a development based on Erdős–Rényi model of random graphs (Erdős & Rényi 1959). In a random network (such as a country's highway system), the number of links on each node follows a degree of distribution called Poisson distribution, where the placement of the links is averaged out in a way that makes the nodes eventually quite similar to each other in terms of the number of their social ties. However, such a distribution law does not explain the sudden emergence of giant node components (hubs) in certain kind of structures such as airline networks or interlinked website systems. The scale-free network follows a **power law distribution**, meaning that there is a large number of nodes in possession of a few links each, and a very small number of hubs—highly connected nodes (Barabási 2011: 1–4). Scale-free property can be observed in most human networks, but also in biological structures such as protein interaction of cell networks (Barabási 2011: 6–7).

The scale-free type also allows to explain the expanding of networks and predict the emergence of hubs. The choice of connecting for new nodes, or which network member we would prefer to interact with as a new-comer, follows the logic of “preferential attachment” meaning that we are more likely to connect to a person with a higher number of social ties. This becomes the defining character for scale-free network type: “as long as there is some process that generates preferential attachment, a network is scale-free.” (Barabási 2011: 9)

While typically, “the earliest nodes in the network become the biggest hubs”, the concept of node's fitness—its ability to attract links, or, in the context of human social ties, “not the chance of running into a person” (the random quality) but “the ability to attract links after these random encounters” gives also late-comers an opportunity to grow faster than others (Barabási 2011: 9–10). However, a “winner takes it all” phenomenon (or Bose-Einstein condensation”) can be observed, where the fittest nodes turn into hubs over time, grabbing all the links and potentially dominating the whole system (ibid).

2.2 Semiotic models for analysing organisational culture

One of the reasons why it is so hard for its members to accept and thrive in the chaotic context of Ouishare may lie in Lotman's recognition that humanity creates **organised** spatial spheres in its cultural space (Lotman 1990: 203, Nöth 2015: 14). In fact, culture's main purpose is to structurally organise the world around the man (Nöth 2015: 16, Lotman & Uspensky 1978 [1971]: 213).

Chaos in the system threatens one's sense of **ontological security**—"confidence that most humans beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action. A sense of the reliability of persons and things, so central to the notion of trust, is basic to feelings of ontological security" (Giddens 1990: 92). Therefore at times, one needs to remove themselves to a less chaotic and more stable environment (unless one is able to recreate the sense of control within the system, as in taking a lead on a project or knowledge area and controlling its aspects).

Using self-description and semiosphere as tools in organisation management can serve to clarify the meaning that the organisation has for its people, as models for collective and inclusive construction of identity. The latter, in turn, can be expected to facilitate integration in the organisational culture, strengthen the team spirit, and empower the individual who has gone through the mental mapping and self-reflection process. Additionally, self-description can be used as a low-stress, high-empathy model for professional development or mentoring interview.

2.2.1 Self-description and semiosphere

"Self-description is a universal semiotic operation by which a semiosphere acknowledges its own specificity and opposes itself to other, so-called outer spheres (Lotman, 2005 [1984], pp. 211–212)"
(Madisson & Ventsel 2015: 4).

In Lotman (2005), a culture's **self-description** serves to outline and hierarchize semiotic space, starting to function as its descriptive metalanguage. The systemic self-description can be seen as a "mythological image" or an "ideological self-portrait", as opposed to "the semiotic reality". At the same time, self-description has the potential as a mechanism of

exclusion, deeming all untranslatable aspects as insignificant, thus leaving them outside the boundaries of the semiotic space (Monticelli 2012: 66–67). In this sense, “the moment of self-description determines the boundary of culture” (ibid, see also Lotman 2001: 196). The ability and aspiration towards self-description is one of the most typical universals of culture that tends to intensify in dynamic circumstances—moments of the cultural explosion where unpredictability is high and teleological interpretation of the ongoing changes is especially difficult (Ojamaa & Torop 2015: 64).

According to Lotman (2000; see also Torop 2014), cultural self-description can proceed in three possible directions with respective outcomes. The first, with an ambition of achieving maximal similarity to the culture it describes, results in culture’s actual self-model. The second, with an aim to change existing practices, gives contrasting and prospective self-models, prescribing the possibility and need for change. The third way constitutes a **cultural ideal** and is not specifically oriented neither toward achieving nor changing it. (Torop 2014: 114, Lotman 2000: 568–580). Additionally, any kind of self-description can be seen as an auto-communicative process aiming to stabilize the internal order, define cultural dominants, and offer a (self-)descriptive metalanguage (Torop 2008: 392). Correspondingly, we can call these three directions and models **descriptive, prospective and idealizing self-descriptions**.

Self-description can be considered as a variation of **identity**, lending to its importance from other disciplines than semiotics. Sociologist and media scientist Vincent Miller, relying on the notion of individualization as popularised by Giddens and Beck (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002, Giddens 1992) describes how under the conditions of globalization especially, individuals are free or even forced to actively construct and maintain their own identities—manifest in biographies and social relationships—as they are liberated from the contexts and determining factors formerly offered by tradition, history and (limited) space (Miller 2008: 388).

Narrative identity is another concept close to self-description. Championed by thinkers such as Dennett (1998), McIntyre (2002 [1981]) and Ricoeur (1980), it essentially provides an ontologically neutral way of articulating the self, stressing the discursive construction of any narratives. In this approach, the narrating person maintains the power to select and prioritise elements of their story, thus affording for the individual’s empowerment (Ritivoi 2009: 27). In other words, it enables reframing self-identity as a form of agency (ibid: 27–32). In the

context of collective identity, instead of compelled structural positioning guided by pre-determined descriptions and choices external to the individual, narrative identity helps position oneself within the immaterial and emotional space of the organisation regardless of the collective self-description, and possibly in a dialogue with it. Especially in volunteer-based activities, a person's motivation to stay is often reliant on how they feel about their contribution and the organisation in general. Enabling the arrangement of these feelings in a meaningful personal narrative helps reveal the tensions, and is the first step toward alleviating or dissolving them, should the leaders wish to address this issue.

The narrative is also a way to formulate the construction of borders and self--other distinction. Ritivoi points out that “narratives [about self-identity] tend to draw upon master plots that act as repositories of normality” (2009: 36). For the self-identity in Ouishare, these repositories consist of previous, ordered experience in the ‘traditional company’, or—in the case of lacking work experience—the projected image of the stable familiar as recounted by surrounding individuals. New encounters with the organisation's people and working culture are constantly compared against such expectation of stability.

The concept of semiosphere offers a way for embedding the immaterial, disembodied elements of culture (Kotov 2002). **Semiosphere** designates the meaningful, **semiotic space**, surrounded by extra-semiotic space, and delimiting, but invisible **boundary** functioning simultaneously as a translator and separator (Lotman 2005: 208–209). It is further characterised by irregularity (as a chaotic element), juxtaposing binaries (inside–outside, self–other) motivated by centre–periphery dynamics, and transference, with “dominant semiotic systems [...] located at the core” (ibid: 214). It is precisely the combination of juxtaposition and centre-periphery fluctuation that offers us a processual view of a dynamic structure that does not need to restrict itself to any specific moment in time and space to be observable.

Lotman's approach, essentially also rooted in cybernetics and systems theory, offers a way to model dynamics in culture without the need to record data on each element separately. In his theory of the semiosphere, he explains the dynamics and change of epochs in the history of culture (on the examples from art and literature) with the help of centre–periphery dynamics, notably the speedy development and information exchange in the periphery that then invades the centre to renew and replace the static, crystallised structures. Lotman stresses that the production of new information requires both the dialogic exchange with the external

and the closed informational sphere (2005). The dynamic motivated by the periphery is necessary for the generation of new meaning, and the static provided by the structured centre affords for its elaborate and thorough communication.

From an outside or novice perspective, the semiospheric centre of Ouishare seems to reside with the active day-to-day physical ‘operations centre’, that is, typically a coworking space or a shared office rented by the local Ouishare chapter, for example in Paris or Barcelona. In such a place, there is usually someone present all the time, working on some Ouishare-related project, dropping in for an individual meeting or a chat, joining one of the weekly community meetings or a project sprint. There are moments when this location is buzzing with activity, and others when the office looks suspiciously neglected because most of the people are engaged elsewhere or simply working from home. Overall, unless one has an appointment, it is hard to predict what to expect.

Another supposed centre is in the digital communications channel, such as the global or local chat group in Telegram app where most of the online conversations seem to take place. This, too, is at times buzzing with notes, reactions and conversations, and completely silent at other times. Whenever one posts there, it is hard to predict whether the message will be noticed, to what extent, and whether it will receive reactions, phatic or informative.

Since all levels of the semiosphere — from human personality to the individual text to the global semiotic unity — are a seemingly inter-connected group of semiospheres, each of them is simultaneously both participant in the dialogue (as part of the semiosphere) and the space of dialogue (the semiosphere as a whole) (Lotman 2005: 225)

Lotman emphasizes the existence of internal borders, and the possible plurality of centres in the semiosphere accounting for the internal production of (new) information (2005: 214–5). In Ouishare, the inner spheres are made of specific project teams and local groups working in one city or another. In a manner not directly related to the content of the work, access to digital information flows divides people in less visible circles, based on the intensity and frequency of online connection (habit to check online chats constantly, once a day/week or much less often), the access to and preference for specific tools (Telegram, Slack, Trello; mobile or desktop access), or the personal social preference for online or offline, group or one-to-one conversations.

The actual semiospheric centre remains rather a “centre of narrational gravity” in the sense of Dennett (1992), an imaginary gravitational point against which everyone can position their own location and involvement. Around this centre, we can imagine everyone rotating at

their own speed and at their chosen distance, which would account for the perception that near the centre, time (or rotation cycle) passes somehow faster than for those further away, whence, on the other hand, one can have a different perspective (sitting at the edge of the galaxy, one can also have a better overview of it all). Out of the galaxy (and out of the semiosphere) are those not at all lured in by its gravitational pull.

2.2.2 Phatic dominant in digitally mediated communication

In the semiotics of culture, messages with **phatic function** are understood as “primarily serving to establish, to prolong, or to discontinue communication, to check whether the channel works [...], to attract the attention of the interlocutor or to confirm his continued attention[...]” (Jakobson 1960: 355). The notion relies on Malinowski’s idea of **phatic communion**, described as “a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words”, exemplified by “the function of speech in mere sociabilities” (Malinowski 1923: 314, 315). Phatic is one of the six functions of language in the theory of linguist Roman Jakobson (1960). In his view, a message typically carries several functions, one of which is dominant over the others.

The phatic aspect in communicative action has long been overlooked for its apparent inability to convey meaning, ever since declared by anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski as “[a] mere phrase of politeness [which] fulfils a function to which the meaning of its words is almost completely irrelevant” (1923: 151). However, this seems to be changing in the era of Internet. In his study based on social network posting of Twitter users, Miller points out that phatic messages may “carry a lot more weight to them than the content itself suggests” (Miller 2008: 395). In line with his tentative plea that “they may not always be ‘meaningless’”, I would like to argue for “the rise of the phatic” (ibid) also in the wider society, including organisational communication, looking for further reasons in the technological developments in society. Regardless of the modest linguistic and informative value assigned to the phatic by Jakobson and Malinowski, phatic function is recently finding new applications in media and social theory, having been assigned higher importance by the researchers of social media sites and computer-mediated communication, resulting in derivative concepts such as phatic technologies and phatic culture.

As for the reasons for using phatic function, it is “part of the process of fulfilling our intrinsically human needs for social cohesiveness and mutual recognition” (Wang et al. 2011: 48; Coupland et al. 1992: 209). “...by using phatic function, such as keeping in touch or performing light conversations, we are avoiding contrast and conflict, and the social and communication tensions are weakening, excluding those who would disturb the structure of the social network.” (Radovanovic & Ragnedda 2012: 12). Studying the phatic meaning is difficult also for the reason that each recipient can give it a different interpretation, based on their personal or demographic background (Wang et al. 2011: 49).

According to Malinowski, phatic communion “is communicatively a most human process” (1923: 316). Jakobson considers that “it is the first verbal function acquired by infants; they are prone to communicate [phatically] before being able to send or receive informative communication” (Jakobson 1960: 356). Hence, as humans, we are phatic-oriented creatures to whom the social interaction process carries first and foremost the meaning of establishing social bonds. Along with this, it is rarely possible to determine the exact perception or meaning of a phatic message to a (diverse) group of people.

In Wang et al. (2011, 2012), **phatic technology** is a “technology that serves to *establish, develop and maintain human relationships*. The primary function of this type of technology is to create a social context with the effect that its users form a social community based on a collection of *interactional goals*.” (Wang et al. 2011: 44, original emphasis). When discussing **technology**, they draw their understanding from Ellul (1964) in that the concept of technology is extended from tools (either manual or machinery) to *technique*, “general methods to accomplish tasks in society” (Wang et al. 2011: 45). The Internet serves as a primary source for and example of phatic technologies, with its strong phatic nature being the underlying motivation for its “rapid integration into human society” (ibid: 49). Wang et al. (2012) set out to understand the sociological significance of phatic technology. Relying on Giddens’ concept of **trust**, they explain that technologies are able to connect individuals globally across time-space, as well as help sustain the sense of intimacy at a distance (Wang et al. 2012: 85). In Giddens (1990: 80...), modern concept of **trust** lies in **faceless commitments**, characterised by faith in symbolic tokens or abstract systems. Modernity has also changed the concept of **strangers** who have turned from the idea of “whole persons” into series of fleeting moments or irregular encounters (Giddens 1990: 85), thus confusing the distinction between alien contacts, acquaintances and intimate friends. Trust, one of the most valued aspects of

Ouishare culture is mediated and reinforced by the faceless commitments of abstract technology. Abstract systems, for their part, become less pronounced in network sociality. In the absence of structure that is supposed to absorb the uncertainties and insure against the unexpected, the ever-moving network of people and fleeting encounters becomes the structure. Apparently, this new type structure can take over facilitating trust relationships, but the role of structure as insurance and stabilizer remains in danger. Maintaining community features can be helpful, but the notion of community alone is not sufficient to translate the existing system of social security into the language of the new sociality. It does enable capitalising on community-like relationships through the network, but the effect is too much reliant on personal popularity. Such new types of social support can be observed, for example, in cross-border crowdfunding campaigns for non-recurrent health support, or platform-facilitated continuous activity subsidies⁴.

Giddens also argues that **talk**—“the casual exchange of conversation in the settings of day-to-day social life”—is the “fundamental carrier of signification” and “the grounding of all the more elaborate and formalised aspects of language use” (Giddens 1987: 91, 99) because it functions through the “indexicality of context and via the ‘methodological devices’ which agents use to produce a ‘meaningful’ social world” (Giddens 1987: 100, see also Garfinkel 1984). Giddens makes a strong point to draw a difference between talk and writing, indicating that it is the best for explicating significance in language (and not writing, as suggested by Derrida). But neither should we consider writing to be merely a ‘representation’ of talk. He prioritises talk because its high referential precision in its use in context—“settings of talk are used by participants to define the nature of what is said” (Giddens 1987: 102). High context-specificity is another aspect complicating the study of the phatic.

In the context of Ouishare and phatic-dominant technologies, Giddens’ “talk” appears in a written format. It is not strictly turned into “writing” in Giddens’ sense, although the latter has transformed from “storage in its pure form” to more complex texts where “the author is unavailable” and we have to make do with a much larger possibility of options to derive reference from (Giddens 1987: 102–106). Even so, the written form of digitally mediated

⁴ An example of a one-time support is the crowdfunding campaign organised for Croatian freelancer Matija Raos to cover his hospital bills in 2017 (<https://freelancersweek.org/freelancers-helping-matija/>). An example of regular activity support is the platform Patreon (<https://www.patreon.com/>) enabling artists and creators to accumulate monthly allowance streams directly from their fans.

“talk” acquires the properties of both, simultaneously simplifying and complicating its possibility for analysis.

Regarding the perception of the other, Jacques Ellul suggests that an individual is initially always at odds with the other: “The ‘other’ represents an invasion of the personal world, unless, or until, the relationship is normalized through symbolization.” (Ellul 1978: 210, Wang & Tucker 2016: 144) Relying on this, Wang and colleagues construct their understanding of **phatic systems**—abstract systems functioning to mediate and alleviate this self–other tension by offering a way to **represent personal identity** and **engage in relationships** (Wang & Tucker 2016: 144). They stress that phatic systems have most profound effect in the private sphere, concerning personal and emotional relations. As such, they provide a digitalisation of face-to-face trust rather than more abstract mechanisms of the public sphere (ibid: 144–5). This also explains how phatic systems and technologies are able to encourage intimacy at a distance despite the lack or deficit of eye to eye encounters.

Phatic has also strengthened its hold on the workplace. James Porter (2017) suggests that in the professional communication of the digital age, phatic becomes the primary function of any communication. This is especially fitting with the network sociality paradigm.

Consequently, the ability to navigate all these technological tools, and willingness to do so plays an important part in a person’s integration journey into the organisation. People react to this cultural requirement in different ways, depending on their social and computer skills, time management habits, and need for information. Participation in both formal and informal communication flows on such tools also presumes certain properties, such as courage to engage with relative strangers, or the level of self-criticism that allows posting and reacting, regardless of the sense of contributing to the information overflow. Phatic messaging elements such as “likes” and other reactive emoji, pictorial “stickers” or animated Graphics Interchange Format images (GIFs) have moved from informal Facebook to professional tools such as Slack (organisation or team chatroom). In line with the importance assigned to the professional phatic by Porter (2017), these elements offer an easy way to indicate one’s presence in reading colleagues’ messages, especially when there is no time, need or will to post a lengthy feedback comment. Such pictorial reactions may also be perceived as demonstration of social support, as indicated in Carr et al. (2016).

There is another concept that will be interesting in the context of phatic studies. Social scientists Zeynep Tufekci & Matthew Brashears (2014: 487) define **cyberasociality** as

“individual’s disposition toward digitally mediated sociality”. They find that this concept does not simply reflect a person’s offline sociality nor standard personality traits (the notion was tested against “the big five” personality measures such as neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness), and that propensity for or against it is not strongly related to demographic variables. They specifically point out that cybersociality has an impact on *how* people use digital social tools, not so much on whether they use them at all (Tufekci & Brashears 2014: 497).

On the question of whether the Internet brings us together or separates us, Tufekci & Brashears assert that reluctance in online social ties usually complement existing ones, and do not replace them. Additionally, they maintain that the two types of sociality are not transferable at all. The disposition towards online socializing would simply result in two segments of people: those who are willing or able to form and maintain social bonds through electronic channels, and those who are not. However, they point out that “those who are able to use the newest information and communication technologies to their social advantage might be best placed to strengthen and expand their social networks”, while the cybersocial would be disadvantaged due to not having access to digital tools or lacking needed digital skills, and may be therefore find themselves **inconveniently excluded from social spaces** and information flows where the communication happens (Tufekci & Brashears 2014: 498).

Consequently, when judging people’s reluctance in engaging in online conversations or online networking platforms, we must look further than basic sociability, and take into account that they may not find it convenient. It may be possible to train online communication skills. However, these mediums have downsides, for instance participating in the platforms may be stressful or overwhelming, and the need for constant connectivity in order to stay up to date may be incompatible with a person’s lifestyle. For successful dissemination of information in a social group, people who prefer offline or less intense communication platforms need to be provided with an alternative stream of information, or contacted separately in case of need or emergency.

3. Method

The main playground of my research is a global collective Ouishare—a network of entrepreneurs, activists and researchers initially interested in the collaborative economy trends, but increasingly working on a number of projects concerning society and technology in a more general way. My role as a researcher during the process was a *complete participant* turned *participant as observer* (Lune & Berg 2017: 59). That is, having been involved in the organisation professionally since 2013, first as a volunteer in the periphery, and from September 2014 as tech support for the global community, I was, from a certain perspective, well aware of the internal workings and general organisation culture. However when I decided to use the organisation in my research, I announced it in a global gathering (Summit) in March 2017, therefore adopting a public position as a researcher (in addition to my continuing role as tech support). With this announcement, I also took a conscious step back from being involved in global governance of the organisation and tried to act more as an observer and listener than someone giving opinions. It significantly changed my personal experience within the organisation and I started noticing and analysing things and patterns that I had taken for granted and as “normality” before. It is still quite complicated to study an object close to oneself, so my position within the organisation may certainly have influenced my observations and conclusions about its working processes.

That said, due to being an insider, it was easy to find and choose interviewees and to establish contact with them. It also enabled very context specific discussions—both interviewer and interviewee were already “cultured” in certain organisation-specific terminology. On the other hand, it may have caused missing some specifics or results that could have been coded but were overlooked, not seeming significant enough due to the subcultural echo chamber.

My daily contribution in the organisation consists of a rather power-neutral role—my task is to help people upon their request which they usually appreciate. Therefore, as well as due to the generally open and confident nature of the group members, I was able to create trusting conversations with the interlocutors. Typically, my working contact with people in Ouishare universe starts from the moment they needed an email address for external communication, which presupposes deeper or longer engagement in activities on their part (person becoming a Connector or being involved in a project). As I was also looking for interlocutors with smaller commitment, there were some I had personally not worked or spoken with before, due to their being involved with the organisation at a local level and/or for a short amount of time.

3.1 Interview questions and process

From July to November 2017, I conducted participant interviews with 17 people involved on different levels in the Ouishare network. These were mostly **semi-standardised interviews** (Lune & Berg 2017: 68–70) conducted individually face-to-face or over a phone call. I used previously agreed upon telephone interviews with a few individuals with whom I had already developed a rapport (Lune & Berg 2017: 78), and who were, for different reasons, unavailable by other means. I spent the summer of 2017 in London as an Erasmus+ intern for the local Ouishare chapter, and the following semester as an exchange student in Bordeaux, from where I took field trips to Paris and Barcelona, having face-to-face interviews with interlocutors who lived in the respective places or were currently travelling in those locations. In all cases, the interviews were recorded, to be transcribed later.

As of 2019, Ouishare has about 60 Connectors worldwide, displayed on the website⁵. Additionally, there is a varying number of people involved in different projects and initiatives within Ouishare ecosystem, either on a project or volunteer basis. As the notion of “active member” is not very clearly defined, and is rather intuition-based⁶, it is hard to estimate the actual number of people daily involved in Ouishare activities, but my educated guess is that it can reach up to about 150 people—so this would be the approximate size of the wider circle I

⁵ <https://www.ouishare.net/active-members>

⁶ See the respective guidelines in Ouishare Handbook:
<https://handbook.ouishare.net/people/active-members.html>

picked my interviewees from. At large, I chose a number of people whom I thought may have interesting insights based on our previous contacts and my knowledge of their involvement intensity—especially regarding Parisian hub which is most familiar to me, as I worked with them closely from 2014 to 2016. As for the people in Barcelona, I received some help and suggestions from the local community coordinator, which thankfully brought me in contact with a few interviewees I had not really met before. Finally, as I spent significant time working alongside the organisation members in the shared work spaces (in Paris, London, Barcelona), I conducted some interviews with people who just happened to be in the same place, and had some time available for the chat. Besides, several previously intended interviewees remained unavailable for different reasons.

Out of the 17 interviews conducted, I eventually selected 12 for my research that had recordings of sufficient quality for transcription. I also left out some initial unstructured interviews, and decided to focus mainly on members in two communities: Paris and Barcelona. Out of the 12 interlocutors, 6 were from Paris, and 6 from Barcelona (designated respectively P1–6 and B1–6). Out of all respondents, 8 were female and 4 male. I approached people with different depths of involvement—community leaders, project managers or participants, current or former volunteers or team members in Ouishare Fest(s), Connectors, active members, members from farther circles of involvement (or the periphery). However, uncharacteristically to the actual global geographical scope of Ouishare, all the interlocutors are from Europe or currently living here⁷. (See Annex 1 for the full list of interlocutors.)

First interviews could be seen as **unstandardised** (Lune & Berg 2017), due to the course of the conversation and/or the occasion being one of the first where the exact questions sequence had not yet settled.

At the beginning of each interview, I briefly introduced my research project (as Master's Thesis in semiotics) unless I had explained it before, and the conditions of confidentiality (interviews being recorded for research purpose but results being used anonymously and not in identifiable manner). Some of the interviewees expressed not having any problem with the idea of being even identified, but in several other cases my perception was that the confidentiality clause served for greater sincerity and openness, especially when talking about

⁷ Besides the main European hubs in Paris, Barcelona, and Munich, Ouishare (as of 2018) also has a variety of mostly Spanish- and Portugal-speaking member groups in the Latin America, a large community in Quebec, and smaller groups or individual members (Connectors) elsewhere.

aspects and examples thought less positive. To start, I would ask my first question (“How did you meet Ouishare?”), and let them recount the experience, leading to precision questions or the following question, and so on. I tried to interrupt as little as possible, but sometimes the shared experience would lead to dialogues, and at times I felt the need to reassure the interviewees that their retelling indeed “does make sense”, or that they were not alone in their experience (especially in case of circumstances perceived as negative or frustrating).

By the 3rd interview, a clear set of open questions had emerged, regarding the organisational identity and interviewee’s role in it, as well as perceptions about organisational goals, working processes, its advantages and disadvantages (see Annex 2: Interview questions). In October 2017, I added a second set of questions concerning phatic communication within the organisational context (Annex 2.2), and questioned the remaining persons with both sets of questions, as well as conducted a repeated interview with a few interlocutors who were available. All in all, I covered phatic questions in 5 interviews. These respondents were coded X1–5.

Interviews were transcribed, then analysed using the cross-case approach in order to find recurring themes, similarities, and differences across the sample of respondents.

3.2 Method for analysing interviews

The material analysis method in overall is best described as taking shape in a dialogue between the material and supporting theories. Firstly, I started coding the cases, trying to find repeated themes or elements within the posed interview questions, which quickly gave an overall structure of recurring elements. However, I quickly realised that there were areas of elements that I could not publish even in a cross-case matrix because the element combinations covered in the first question (How did you meet Ouishare?) made for unique stories for each individual, thus enabling easy recognition of the person, and possibly de-anonymizing the entire set of quotations. So I purposefully replaced any identifiable information such as proper names with random letter signifiers or general nouns (e.g. “I worked with X”, “A/B said...”, “we were hanging out in [city]”). For the same reason all the data is displayed as cross-case matrix and data consolidation lists, but not as full transcripts.

Secondly, when coding the interview transcriptions, and analysing the features considered either positive or negative (advantageous or disadvantageous) by the participants, it became apparent that certain features were perceived rather on an axis or scale, where the interlocutors placed their individual or organisational self-description, featuring either the Self or the Other. While for some scales it was more palpable towards which end the “Ouishare-like” perception would shift, it was not that evident for all of them. This prompted the idea of coding parts of the results as dichotomies or “dominants of Ouishare”, thus allowing for a dynamic evaluation of the self-description placements, and producing a sub-chapter (4.3) analysing these axes.

4. Analysis of Ouishare with the semiotic models

In the course of analysing a culture's self-communication we inevitably arrive at the definition of its identity. In today's world, between global and local processes there exists a field of tension in which many ambivalent and hybrid phenomena take place. Because of this, it is especially important to understand the need of individuals and societies for defining their Self, their identity, and semiotics of culture is becoming increasingly relevant in achieving this understanding. (Torop 2014: 112)

In the context of semiosphere, especially the idea that innovation is driven by a peripheral perspective, and with the space for creativity being one of the most valuable characteristics of Ouishare as seen by its members, we can see the formation of a highly dynamic environment. Navigating that space in the search of balance between belonging, success, opportunity, power, cultural fit and access to information proves to be a challenge for anyone wishing to integrate into the network. Positioning of the Self in relation to different power centres is motivated by sometimes controversial ambitions.

In short, there is no clear and commonly accepted way of articulating how one may set and achieve one's goals, as the configuration of the environment changes simultaneously in unpredictable directions. I am not suggesting that this conspicuous dynamics is characteristic to collectives such as Ouishare only. It is certainly suitable to other hybrid forms of organisations, for example those combining members or employees with different involvement levels (full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer positions). Additionally, the general inclination towards network sociality will rather prompt the visibility of dynamics in any organisation, if there are tools to observe it.

The following chapter offers a multi-angle analysis of Ouishare as perceived by its members. Following an overview of the development of the community and its basic

characteristics, I will show briefly how its members fit the description of the new elite⁸ of network sociality. The main focus of the further sections⁹ will be on applying the semiotic models to reveal the dynamics and explain the processes in Ouishare. In subchapter 4.3 I will discuss the “Ouishare dominants”¹⁰, the five characteristics of Ouishare culture that emerged in the interviews, forming an ideal self-description of the organisation. The last section will be dedicated to the analysis of the phatic function in Ouishare, based on the interviewees discussing their usage and perception of phatic elements in organisational communication. Phatic communication will reveal additional fit into the paradigm of network sociality, as it helps further aspects of temporality and information as a commodity.

4.1 A brief history of Ouishare as an unconventional organisation

In 2011, some young French graduates in Paris and Île-de-France area started being interested in the collaborative practices emerging in the digitally fueled economy. Partly inspired by Rachel Botsman’s best-selling book *What’s Mine is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption*, published in 2010, a young entrepreneur Antonin Léonard had started a blog¹¹ on the topic and built a supporting Facebook group around it. This turned into real-life conversations around shared dinners, then a growing community around joint interests. In 2012, Antonin proposed to call the emerging community “OuiShare”: *oui* as “yes” in French—a bilingual word game on the phrase “yes, we share”. The initial brand was born. In 2012, it was legally cemented as a French non-profit *Ouishare Association*.¹²

Meanwhile, the French-speaking Facebook group on collaborative consumption had turned into an international one. There were meetups (“Ouishare Drinks”) occurring all over Europe and the network was growing fast. To designate community membership, Ouisharers came up with the role of Connector. This meant a person in charge of the brand, or

⁸ Wittel calls it the “new middle class” of computer-literate and well-educated people (2001: 52). Ouishare self-descriptions add the “elite” signifier, recognising their privilege over the rest of the society. Both views implicitly suggest that while Wittel’s concept fittingly describes a new paradigm of sociality, it may remain applicable to only a certain segment of society, and not to everyone.

⁹ See Annexes 4.1 to 4.3 for the full display of relevant interview quotes in a cross-case matrix

¹⁰ See Annex 4.4 for the Self–Other oppositional matrix of Ouishare dominants

¹¹ <https://consocollaborative.com/interview/conso-collaboration/>

¹² Recount based on my knowledge and supported by the blog article on <https://www.ouishare.net/article/from-a-facebook-group-to-an-international-organization-the-story-of-ouishare> (Accessed 20.04.2019)

“connecting” people either in a local area (city connectors) or around a specific topic (food, mobility, etc.) in one of the many thematic Facebook groups.

By 2013, the community arrived at organising their first flagship event Ouishare Fest, which ran in Paris annually until 2017, and a few similar festivals were also organised in Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro in the years 2015–2017¹³. Once dubbed as “TED meets Burning Man” by a visitor, the Fests were a fast-paced combination of a business conference (15-minute grand stage talks, hour-long panels and workshops), entertainment (performers throughout and an ending nightclub-style party), and networking, spiced with deeply spiritual topics discussed in some workshops. Running principally on volunteer power, these festivals, at least in France, attracted diverse visitors ranging from smaller- and bigger-scale business leaders to government officials, academics, young start-uppers and *bourgeois-bohème* Parisians. Apart from organising events, the members of Ouishare carried out different research and consultation projects in cooperation with public and private stakeholders¹⁴.

As of 2019, the scope of Ouishare-branded endeavors remains similar. As a formal organisation, Ouishare consists of a number of legal entities in several countries, most of which are not-for-profit entities but not only (see Annex 3.1)¹⁵. The separate legal entities are not officially linked in any manner, and the governance of the global “Ouishare community” is not tied to any single one of these entities. All of the entities use the global Ouishare brand and its productions of “Commons”¹⁶ as a point of reference for their own activities, but these relationships are not regulated further than minimally necessary, in the sense that the entities have no formal obligations toward one another, except for the three entities in France, which are linked in the manner that Ouishare Association is the principal owner and administrator of Ouishare SAS (company) as well as of Ouishare Foundation. All of the non-French “satellites” are, *de facto* and *de iure*, completely independent.

This rather unconventional setup accordingly means that “Ouishare Global” as a brand, organisation, community, network or whatever it is called, forms an imaginary, purely semiotic construct. It exists by virtue alone of its members’ commitment of thought and activities; it is an imagined community (Anderson 1983) perhaps even more so than a nation

¹³ Full list of Ouishare Fests and other large-scale events of 2013—2019 can be found on <https://www.ouishare.net/fest> (“All events” tab)

¹⁴ See a selection of Ouishare projects (“Caste Studies”) on <https://www.ouishare.net/case-studies>

¹⁵ <https://handbook.ouishare.net/ouishare-legal-entities>

¹⁶ <https://handbook.ouishare.net/governance-and-decision-making/ouishare-commons>

would be. Being part of Ouishare network comes about by one's intent and self-declaration rather than being issued a document of identification. There is an official "active member" status in the notion of "Connector" that now comes with its set of entry rituals (such as providing a letter of intent, contributing 3 months on a project and being endorsed by 3 active Connectors), but the exact scope and meaning of this role is under permanent construction and re-negotiation.

Ouishare has a very strong online presence evident since its beginnings, characterised by the proliferation of "Ouishare"-designated local and thematic Facebook groups in 2012–2014. It is not a strictly virtual community in the sense of Mosco (2004) or Parks (2011), as its activities are foremost constituted offline, as explained by one of the initial values, "Meet People in Real Life" (see Annex 2.2 for Ouishare values). Therefore it does not fit the stereotype of an online-first group such as open source web developer communities, nor is it a social media platform affording the emergence of online and offline communities such as Myspace, Twitter or Facebook.

4.2 Ouishare as a community, network, or organisation

As follows from the previous discussion, "Ouishare" can potentially mean many different things to an individual, and carry several functions. The same is true for any other company or organisation in a person's life: it can be an employer, a community of colleagues or friends, an office, benefits of the internal network, a career platform or many other things. The specific choice is perhaps afforded by the culture and regulations of the organisation—it is more likely to function as a community or network if there are joint events or communication platforms offered to the employees. On the other hand, the choice belongs as much to the person themselves—the choice of where they place the entity in their identity space.

Undoubtedly, Ouishare is a very interesting research object in that it does not necessarily aim to occupy any traditional, habitual categories such as "work", but its working culture rather aims to blur the existing category boundaries and achieve more and in different ways.

One of the first content questions invites my interviewees to reflect on the identity, role, and meaning of Ouishare for themselves and for the society. Only later in my analysis process I realised that while I had offered no other specific denominators, there were three that started

repeating in the responses where my interlocutor replaced “Ouishare” with either *community*, *network* or *organisation*. There are also other metaphors and expressions occurring where respondents tried to avoid using the proper name over and over, or simply searched for figures of speech to illustrate their interpretation.

As for the main three, all of these notions are used interchangeably in the self-descriptions, and while one of them may take priority for a given individual, on average they carry similar weight. There are several people who use equally all three to evoke Ouishare, and everyone also calls the organisation by its name (the word “Ouishare” occurred 22–83 times in each interview). “Community” is perhaps the most popular signifier, used at least once by every interviewee, and as Figure 1 suggests, beyond a “community”, Ouishare is on average understood more as a “network” and less of an “organisation”.

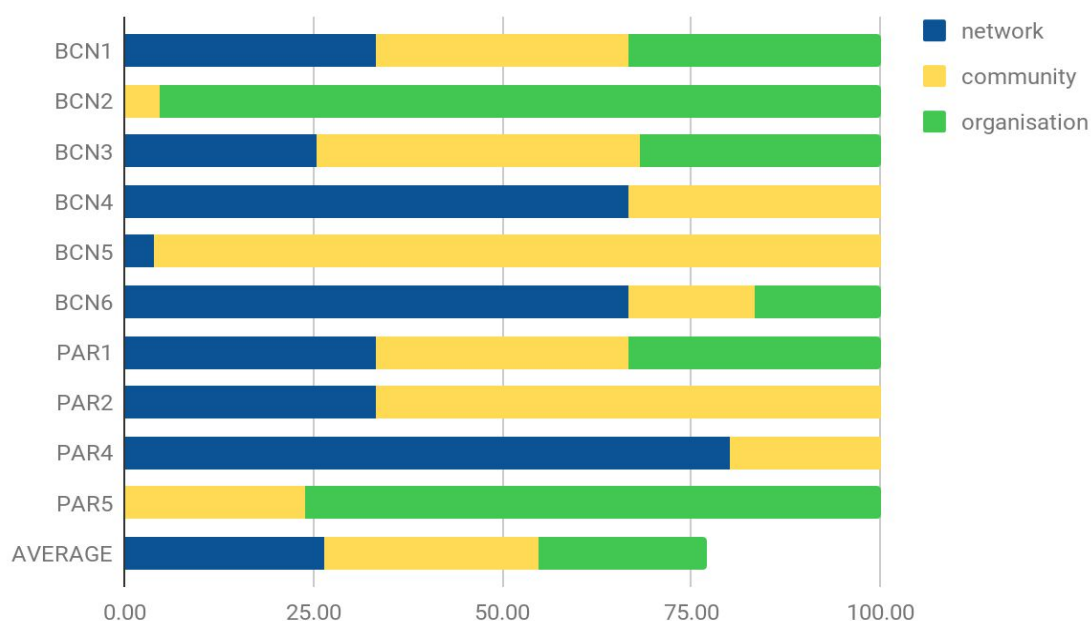


Figure 1: preferences of general signifier for Ouishare: percentage of occurrence of the words network, community and organisation in describing the collective

The following examples demonstrate how the signifier and perceived meaning of the same entity can vary among group members—all three quotes are from the Barcelona branch.

I would call it... it's my community. It's where—when it comes to ideology [or] values—I feel at home. It's a bunch of really nice and interesting people that I love, and I identify myself with it. And it allows me to do projects and to develop myself in a way that would not be possible in any other way. (B5)

Basically my description of Ouishare is that we are a network. We are a network that is trying to work in a different way, we organise in a different way. And I think we have no idea what we're doing most of the time (laughs). But we try and try and try and I think we achieve. And we get things done, and we definitely move on, and I definitely see a very clear evolution. (B6)

If I was going to describe it to a friend of mine who has no idea about Ouishare, I would say it's an international organisation interested in the intersection between technology and social change, and the effects that they generate on different scales [...] (B2)

To some extent, these signifiers may refer to different levels of involvement in the collective: *community* as the geographically or mentally closer group of people one is most involved with, and has friendly relationships with, and *network* as the global Ouishare, made of people one has (probably) never met but who are visible in internal online communication tools and generally accessible upon request. *Organisation* would hint at a legal view or professional, working relationship, but it can also be a simple generalisation without personal attachment. These connotations draw out more clearly due to my background knowledge of the relative involvement intensity of each interlocutor, and the general feeling of their mental positioning within the organisational space on the centre-periphery axis. However, these implications are as much constructed as they are deduced, and entirely subjective on my part. Even within the same culture area (for example in Paris or Barcelona), the choice and meaning of a specific designator seems to be highly individual and does not necessarily correlate to the desired position in or relationship with the organisation. Guessing the meaning in such a way is a complex endeavor, and hereby serves rather as a possible reflection point for the individuals themselves.

4.2.1 The people of Ouishare as the digitally educated new elite

Wittel stresses that network sociality is prevalent among specifically “the new middle class of culturally educated and media- and computer-literate people” (Wittel 2001: 52–53). This describes Ouishare quite accurately, at least in the eyes of several interlocutors who see its members as privileged, elitist, with elite education and language skills, and with access to high-quality information:

I think we are very privileged in many aspects—so obviously Ouishare, we recognise that we are a little bit elitist, people who speak languages, who travel, who have no problem to have shelter or food, let's say—we are a little bit of privileged class, maybe middle class or middle high class.[...] (B3)

obviously multicultural, having many different faces, not being very tied to a specific place [...] we have this confrontation of all the different cultures all the time[...] I'm finding it quite funny, the cultural lines that appear. And also that they get mixed around, Italians in London and so on. (P1)

it's very interesting to learn from them because there's many people who are looking to very different directions, that give references, that invite you to read articles that you wouldn't be able to find and so on [...] (B2)

Being computer-literate is also manifest in the conviction that Ouishare network members have a better collective understanding of the potential of technology than the rest of the world (B3), as well as the fact that the organisation uses multiple digital tools for communication and workflow management such as Loomio, Trello, Slack, Telegram, Facebook groups, WhatsApp, Doodle and many others—tools that some members have difficulties to get fully accustomed with.

It has also been stressed that the educational background of people in Ouishare is similar:

...basically people of Ouishare are people from business schools and Sciences Po. They are people of connection, network.(P4)¹⁷

This applies predominantly to the Paris community, where many young people with the education from Sciences Po (The Paris Institute of Political Studies) can be found. At the same time, there are people with completely different backgrounds in the community as well. At the global level, Ouishare members community is even more diverse, although it is true that it is more suitable for people with entrepreneurial mindset. This is due to the initial interest in the sharing economy, but also to the fact that, in order to function in the network, one needs to be financially independent in most cases.

At the same time, however, Ouishare's multiculturalism is rather an ideal image. As admitted by many interviewees, members of the group are predominantly white and educated, originating from Western European cultural spaces. The most commonly used languages globally are French, English and Spanish, with local communities also speaking Catalan¹⁸, German and Italian.

¹⁷ “fondamentalement les gens d'Ouishare ce sont des gens d'écoles de commerce et de Sciences Po. C'est des gens de connexion, de réseau.” (P4)

¹⁸ Ouishare Spanish community started in Barcelona as Ouishare Catalunya group, providing a bilingual space for its members who usually prefer to speak each in their primary language, but understand each other well. In the rest of Spain and with Latin American communities, the exchange takes place in Castilian Spanish.

4.2.3 Ouishare self-description

In an organisation that is not very explicit about its working rules and habits, and that aims for maximal functional flexibility in order to fit its members' goals and work-related needs, self-description may become a process or mechanism of continuous self-reflection. As put succinctly by an interlocutor, "Ouishare sort of escapes definition, by definition." Elaborated further by the same person:

I find it hilarious that no-one does [understand what Ouishare is]. I thought I was the dumb one, but when I discovered that it's like a common joke for everyone to not know what we do... (P2)

The acts of metastructural self-descriptions that become self-models foster the static—the structuration and crystallization of the center in the semiosphere. Ouishare, in its aim to evade the static to the maximal extent, accordingly evades a finite self-definition—the mere act of which could disperse and freeze the sense of its chaotic freedom and innovation.

Seems that self-reflexivity is not always oriented toward achieving a valid self-description, but is rather characterised by the constant state of confusion or identity crisis. It can be more or less stressful for a given individual. The constant state of reflectiveness is noted as something positive by others:

But the interesting thing is that there is reflexivity. [...] And this is something very noble, very appreciable within Ouishare. I like that. I like hindsight: all the people in this group think, and ask questions, they are in doubt—is this good, is it good to do like this... (P4)

It's a group of people who are really interested in understanding the world and changing it, and who are willing to not only think about how to change the system but about how they organise themselves for changing the system. (B2)

In nearly every annual gathering, part of the discussion is held on the topic of identity—things, directions and projects that have been present in the activities of the year, and the directions to come. There have been lengthy discussions offline and online on the ethical choices of (company) partners for the organisation. A few interlocutors pointed out the importance of "focusing on the *how*": it is at least as important as *how* things are done, as it is *what* is being done. This correlates partly with the efforts to be different from *traditional organisations* or traditional business people. These are perceived as more static, automatic, and less ethical:

And usually, someone who wasn't "Ouishare spirit", someone who was out for his own advantage only, not cool, not nice, not being that open, and [...] looking much more out for yourself than the collective [...]. If you're being super commercial, that's definitely a no-go. [...] It's definitely no problem that you wanna have a business and you wanna make money, nothing wrong with that, but it's something about the way you go about it, and the way you're pushing your product on someone else—that's definitely not Ouishare spirit. (P1)

This reflects certain fatigue with the state of commercial culture in general. One of the much cited values of Ouishare collective is the ability to see the bigger picture (B3), and provide understandable explanations of complex phenomena (especially related to society and technology) by “building a narrative that makes it simpler but without losing the complexity” (B2). It is actually not certain to what extent Ouishare is *building a narrative*—it is more likely re-arranging the knowledge databases of the society in ways that help navigate the chaos in a more efficient manner; as well as pointing out the obvious to outsiders who are lost in the overwhelming flows of information, and using its collective intelligence pool to find relevant answers to a wide range of issues. Due to the relatively wide range of interests among its young professional members, it seems easy to be aware more possibilities as a community. On the other hand, the chaotic culture complicates the applicability.

In asking my interviewees to describe the collective self (“Ouishare people”) and the Other (non-Ouishare people), I am wittingly committing a manipulation of self-description by forcing them to draw the borders, even if they may never have thought of this before. Most of them gladly comply, testifying that there are features among the group that distinguish them from the speakers’ common environments—characteristics found attractive in many cases, and confusing in others. There is one person who actively resists drawing the line and describing the Other:

*I think that's interesting. I mean this distinction between us and them. Because to me and in a way “them” doesn't make any sense in Ouishare context, because I think there is an “us”, but anyone could be us, could be part of us. [...] we don't have borders, they are not that clear, who is from Ouishare and who is not from Ouishare. [...] I wouldn't want to distinguish between us and them. Because **them** is the rest of humanity or... [...] And I think this mentality us vs them is completely far away from the Ouishare principle. [...] we don't do these visions. I think there is **us** when we work together. There is **us** because we are a community. (B5)*

This lengthy self-reflection provokes a question on the possibility of self-description without alienating the Other. Several people indicate that Ouishare is not “radical”, for example (B3, B5). It is also pointed out that Ouishare is good at facilitating dialogue between different kinds of stakeholders:

we can bridge a lot of other networks [---] We are able to have this strong connection with all the networks which might be similar but not the same as we are, and we get their point of view and they get ours, and i think that's for me one of the key elements and the things i enjoy in Ouishare (B3)

Ouishare is also understood as the **sum of the knowledge of its people**—as experts and consultants in digital economy (B3), trend hunters (X3, P1), or experts and experimenters on technology and societal change:

it's an NGO, with an interest in topics like The future of work, new models of organisations, trying to rethink structures, and experiment. Then I get a weird look and people stop asking questions. (P2)

From personal perspectives, Ouishare is also described as an **organisation for its people**—a place for self-confrontation and challenging oneself (P1, B1, B3, B6, X3), self-development and “growing up” (B1, B5, B2, X3, P1), an accelerated learning curve (P1, B1, B2, B3) or place for experimentation and trying out new things (B1, B2, B3, B6). This is summed up by the image of an **organisation that is creating itself**, adaptable to any possible change in direction:

There's also the experience of belonging to an organisation that is creating itself. Where the willingness is to have no hierarchy, to be very open, to have all these values that allows it to adapt to whatever the people who are involved, want it to be. (B2)

The last example demonstrates how Ouishare never arrives at a finalised structure, the adaptability being conceived as a value in itself. In a sense, this is an organisation not aiming for an exhaustive self-description, except it formulated as a maximal flexibility to change to whatever purposes.

4.2.4 Ouishare semiosphere

In Lotman, the periphery is the area of accelerated semiotic processes, a place for instability in creativity, while the centre stands for stability and stagnation. In Ouishare, much like regarding cyberspace, the organised properties of the semiosphere seem to have switched opposites: the geographical centre that is Paris seems to stand for instability, constant change and faster pace of development, while the peripheries struggle to catch up. And the boundary, even less than in post-structuralist semiosphere, is an ever-expanding territory encompassing everything except for the real core. Paradoxically, in Ouishare the stability of the core is a

mirage. The inside of Ouisphere is perceived as chaotic, in opposition to the outside's traditional way of orderly organisation. This looks like a semiosphere reversed. Is it?

Perhaps the basic, metaphorical comparisons to the physics of atoms or galaxies (also spheric constructs in our minds) can help us conceptualize further the "rotation physics" for a semiosphere. As per Lotman, the centre of 'Ouisphere' is conceived as static because it is imagined as an instance of unity. While when looking at this from the perspective of the network of individuals, for each individual, there is no real centre, because in a network, nobody is and nobody feels as if they were (in) the centre¹⁹.

There is still something arguably non-chaotic about Ouishare self-description: the internality is constructed as a space of certain order where dialogue between different components becomes possible, as opposed to the outside where the said components are less able to dialogue on their own. Of course, Ouishare discourse about the outer organisation of its space is not that categorical.

I find the interesting part is that it's not just about tolerance, it's also about the debate, about the conversation and not just the juxtaposition of texts. Eventually, there is a dialogue, even if people do not agree [with each other] (P5)²⁰

For me, the strength of Ouishare team [...] is in knowing how to introduce people to new ideas, and connect them, even if a bit forcibly, but without being aggressive (P4)²¹

The dialogue concept offers another self-image: the outside of Ouisphere is constituted as a place for multiple hermetic semiospheres of different kinds. Their hermeticity accounts for the inability to exchange on their own volition, as each speaks their own language: governments, businesses, non-governmental organisations, activists. The role of Ouishare role is seen as to facilitate the dialogue, thus it has to permeate their boundaries, or, in incorporating the other into itself, penetrate the boundaries of other's organisational culture. The multiplicity of others may be the reason why the inside of Ouishare is so chaotic: after all, its goal is not to assimilate the other with its own culture, but simply create a space for dialogue.

¹⁹ Julia Kristeva compares this to centrifugal and centripetal forces, the latter of which "aims to settle the ego as center of the solar system of objects" (1982: 14), that is, everyone is the center of their own (info)sphere. Directing the desire to understand toward the Other reverses the rotation back to centrifugal (ibid).

²⁰ "Moi je trouve que ce qui est intéressant c'est que ce n'est pas seulement de la tolérance c'est aussi de la mise en débat, fait de la conversation et pas seulement la juxtaposition des textes. Finalement il y a un dialogue même si les gens ne sont pas d'accord." (P5)

²¹ "Pour moi la force de Ouishare équipe, qui est antinomique, c'est de savoir, forcer un peu mais sans forcer, sans être agressif, amener aux gens les nouvelles idées, les trucs et mettre les gens en connexion." (P4)

The inside of Ouishare is characterised as a space for infinite self-development and limitless creativity. The reality is yet somehow different (the thesis for limitlessness is not valid, or is hard, or not accessible for everyone).

It's an organisation that allows you to continuously learn and continue developing yourself, which is very positive (B2)

as long as I thought that I was learning at a much faster pace than I would in a more traditional job, I kept going for staying in Ouishare. And the idea was like accelerated learning curve... (P1)

The idea that OuiShare is this sort of place where you can grow and expand and do more, but in the everyday life I feel complete opposite. I don't know why. I tried to think a lot about it, but I never... (P2)

It is true that all of the intentions are describable as vectors of movement of different kinds: being on the outskirts, one wishes to move closer. Being in the centre, one wishes to move with the central flow, or to move toward the periphery, and most people are actually content to be engaged and disengaged constantly.

Ouisphere, imbued with digitally mediated communication, and much like its sister-sphere cyberspace, has liquid boundaries and dynamic centres. Its principles of organisation are rather characterised by Lash's disorganisation and Barabasi's scale-free networks.

Information does not equal to knowledge, and as Ouishare case well shows, the physical presence and virtual availability of information spaces do not automatically make for their semiotic availability. In theory, communication channels of Ouishare are open and accessible to everyone who wishes to be part of them. However the communication is still mixed online and offline; eventually nearly nobody feels being at the top of it all (at least none of the interlocutors I spoke with, felt that they have full overview and control of everything that is happening in the organisation). The seemingly easy access to information, on the other hand, also creates a situation where people are afraid to contribute to the duplication of information ("I don't want to disturb/spam people"). Even full availability and access to information, in turn, does not guarantee that everyone is able to create meaning out of it—that it makes sense to them. One can do their best to send out the message, but its reception and interpretation cannot fully be controlled.

While there is an "Ouishare handbook", the ever-changing interpretation says that it is not always accurate. How, then, is it possible to learn the rules if anyone can divert from them, and what scope of diversion is collectively acceptable? There is no clear answer, and the

general culture of experimentation suggests that one should try and find out. Intuiting the ‘correct’ amount of diversion is the ticket to cultural inclusion.

The *know-how* or practical knowledge has always been of great value in organisations. Compared to the worries in a typical company of a long-time employee leaving without being able to “offload” the accumulated experience, in Ouishare network people (with rare exceptions) never really “go away”. There is no defined procedure for fully stopping being part of the network. A Connector can “Alumnize” but the “opt-in” in a next cycle is invited to happen by a personal decision. This seems to guarantee that there always remains a theoretical access to the know-how of a former active member, unlike in traditional jobs where work contracts and competition laws regulate the ownership of certain knowledge and which companies one can talk to (or not).

4.3 Five dominants of Ouishare organisational culture

These axes of Ouishare are often positioned as the ideal, and in the context of self-evaluation, either as something (positive) that has been acquired by joining the organisation, or as something that one feels lacking and therefore not in the best cultural fit with the community.

Some of them also fit in the network sociality paradigm and could be descriptive of a successful “networker” as well. In the context of my research object, I suggest that in order to become a successful or well integrated member of Ouishare, one should ideally know **how to navigate these five dichotomies**. I claim that it is not essential to be in a certain position on each of them, but it is important to have a general understanding of these axes and what they encompass, as well as have the ability to position oneself depending on the momentary context, that is, move along these axes. In a way, they would constitute “an ideal cultural self-consciousness” in the sense of Lotman (2000: 568–580) and Torop (2014: 114), rather than a prospective self-model. Although teasingly called “the big five” in the Introduction, they are not to be equalled with personality traits. On the contrary, these are rather scales of involvement intensity that offer deliberate positioning of the Self within the organisation, variable in time and context. Overall, their function is to provide a certain mapping of the

mental space, an arrangement or organisation of the culture with the aim of empowerment of the individual in it, and leaving them with a sense of control.

The selection of the five (trust, movement, chaos resilience, curiosity, affect) is based solely on the interviews and condensed characteristics of Ouishare universe as they were described and repeated over and over again. These five dominants are Ouishare-specific, and their pertinence to other organisations remains an object for further research. However, there is some universality to these notions insofar as they compare to network sociality features, and to the general trends of contemporary society.

4.3.1 Trust

In the context of growing disembeddedness in society, trust and security have increasing importance in human relationships (Miller 2008: 388), and consequently, need continuous attention and further sustenance.

The idea of trust in Ouishare appears in general contextual descriptions (“We have a lot of trust in the community. That’s one of the things it’s built on,” P1; “you need to trust people to intuit good information,” P4), or describing for example local Facebook groups where the “stronger sense of physical community [...] makes the group work better because there’s a higher degree of trust” (X4). Trust is also described in subjective, embodied context as the feeling of being trusted or not being judged when entering the community (“it seems that there are no mistakes in Ouishare, there are only learnings,” B1; also B2), sometimes contrasting with previous experience to the extent that it seems surprising in Ouishare:

when I came to Ouishare I discovered I could do things that I didn’t know I could do; and also that people trust me. Not because of my background, but because of the potential they see I could have, which is really different from the world we live. So you only need to show interest in this, and they really give you the opportunity. (B1)

The connotations of trust also emerge below in the perceived freedom of experimentation and sense of openness, as well as in the belief or perception that people in Ouishare network are mostly or exclusively “nice” (also amazing, smart, respectful, etc.), attested to by at least half of the respondents.

The dual scale of trust, or the lack of trust outside Ouishare is not directly mentioned. However, the idea of trust emerges as a clear binary in the threshold remarks contrasting

previous experience and in the surprise in being trusted in Ouishare. Even if the perceived level of trust varies within Ouishare, as mentioned in the example of changing trust degree in different Facebook groups, or outside of the organisation, as previous encounters are not described as something specifically trustless, it still appears that the contrast is at times high enough to warrant attention. Therefore the first dominant-scale paints a self-description where the amount of trust within the community is perceived as significantly higher than outside or in previous experience. Such high level of trust is described simultaneously as a property and a prerequisite for a successful navigation of the informational space that is Ouishare, leaving the “other” in a position where trust is unmarked or reversed.

4.3.2 Movement

The sense of constant movement or dynamics is one of the permeating properties of the organisation, characterised by a sense of mental and physical dynamics, flexibility of ideas, but also opportunism. It corresponds to the organisational value of “Permanent Beta” and to a certain extent matches the ephemerality of relations in Wittel’s model.

Physical movement within Ouishare is evident in physical, geographical placement and displacement (B2, “being in places”—B3, P1), the idea of Ouishare as a community of travellers (B3, X3). Movement extends through the mental sphere via the notion of general openness, and an open mind as a characteristic of an “Ouishare person” (B1, B2, P1). Often it is the kind of movement for the sake of it:

there are a lot of people [in Ouishare] who are trying to do this kind of flexibility lifestyle with no norms or more flexible norms... (P2)

You’re here, you’re there, this is also quite impressive. [...] you end up being in a lot of places on behalf of Ouishare [...] [people] who travel a lot (B3)

it’s like randomly being in places, just because (P1)

most people in OuisShare are pretty dynamic, and open to change, used to change [...] (P1)

This flow does not always have a sense of direction, but is perceived as more of an agitation, especially in the first confrontations with Ouishare: the randomness of half-formal encounters (P1, above) or being “here and there”. Geographical displacement also means the opportunity or obligation to travel a lot—either representing Ouishare, or by virtue of a

nomadic freelancer lifestyle one may have had previously or gained via association to the organisation.

Mental movement is reflected in the flexibility of ideas, also characteristic to network sociality, the sense of discovery (navigation and ship metaphors), and the description of Ouishare as a point of passing through (“it may not be a station, like the arrival station, but it’s a very interesting hub or collective to go through”, B2).

Observing the movement from a peripheral or external viewpoint can result in a somewhat organismic or agentic perception of the organisation that is seen as internally chaotic but still constituting a whole. This sense of an organism comes up in several metaphors used for Ouishare. For instance, it is described as a molecule: “all these different atoms and ions that are vibrating in different directions yet somehow make up the same molecule” (P3). Ouishare as an agentic entity is also perceivable in other metaphors such as fire, boat, or simply a shape-changing thing. These figurative representations are likely arising from the fact that due to undefined management, it is not always possible to attribute what happens in the organisation to specific people, so the palpable sense of purposefulness is distributed on the invisible structure, organisation itself, making it seem somehow intentional, “alive”.

In the movement dichotomy, geographical and mental flexibility is the preferred norm in Ouishare, as opposed to rigidity projected on the outside. However, it is also described in rather idealistic terms, and people admit that a fully moving life is not always feasible and may become too intense, which is why occasionally it is better to move away from it completely or for some time to return later. Such a rotational movement as a prerequisite is one of those attributes that makes me imagine a gravitational body visited by objects on elliptic and hyperbolic orbits.

4.3.3 Unpredictability resilience

The current name of this characteristic (unpredictability resilience) is strongly influenced by Lotman’s idea of unpredictability in culture. In his words, unpredictability is an explosive type of change, as opposed to gradual, predictable change. Lotman compares the latter to the technical realisation of new scientific ideas, determined and shaped by the affordances of the

existing machinery, while the ideas themselves may have been occurred in an explosive fashion (Lotman 2009: 7).

In Ouishare, the temporality of network sociality brings out the strongest feelings in those who are struggling to understand how things are done. In a befitting and somewhat ironic words of an interlocutor,

trying to make OuiShare work [is] a thing that will never be done [...] I'm good at organising things, which is why Ouishare is good for me, because I can perpetually organise things and it keeps getting disorganised again. But it's also super super tiring. And it never lasts. (P1)

Elsewhere, reflecting on a failure to launch a project, an interviewee expresses the opposite of frustration:

It's okay, because at least you have the perspective of how people feel, if they feel comfortable, and that's enough for me. [...] I don't know how to define this concept, but it's like ... just keep on going and you'll do things. But don't feel disappointed when something is not working, because it's normal. (B1)

It is important to remember that for Lotman, unpredictability does not mean randomness, but rather “a specific collection of equally probable possibilities from which only one may be realised” (Lotman 2009: 123). This makes for a good connotation for the fear or frustration of failure—each time, there are certainly possibilities of a project working or not, or different combinations of conditions around it (team, funding, timeframe). In retrospective, we conceive of the actual result in our minds—success or failure, in a simplified way—but may not be able to imagine all the granulated possibilities introduced by each variable, of which success in our desired manner is just one of many. Furthermore, the start-up-like and to a large extent volunteer-based environment of Ouishare does not necessarily support the realisation of ideas in a similar fashion to a conventional company, where an executive may be guaranteed financial and human resources before the project starts, and is usually salaried for the preparation of project proposal. At the same time, more strictly regulated processes in more gradually changing organisations are just as unpredictable to a certain extent.

Nevertheless, explosive unpredictability is intimidating. Several interviewees point out that the level of acceptance for chaos and contradictions normalised in Ouishare may turn out as an entrance threshold in the organisation, or a reason to leave:

obviously, you cannot be perfect, while you do things, you make mistakes, it's the only thing, and some people will not tolerate these mistakes or these contradictions that sometimes occur in Ouishare, and they prefer to leave because they feel that this is not fair for them. (B3)

a lot of energy and money and resources lost in that chaos, a lot, that's frustrating (P2)

Darwinism in Ouishare [...] Because there's quite a natural selection of who stays. If you want to get involved and you're all confused because confusion initially is a thing that scares off anyone who wants too much structure. [...] the survival of the fittest thing (P1)

the level of informality in terms of processes makes it hard for people to really get into the organisation. (B2)

Nevertheless, it can also be a springboard for opportunities, in case one can afford to accept the situation as it is, as explained in the following statements.

Lotman emphasizes that “any intersection of systems sharply increases the unpredictability of future movements” (2009: 65). As the interests of Ouishare lie at the intersection of technology and society, as mentioned before, and it aims to connect different stakeholders—or semiospheres, we can say—it is deliberately positioned in the space of unpredictability and (cultural) explosion. Consequently, the ability to withstand chaos becomes an essential skill in the attempts at re-organising the structures and practices of the wider environment. On the other hand, members still expect the organisation to provide them with a “stable core” within the larger chaos of society. While it is comfortable to practice chaotic life among the *nice people* that make up Ouishare, overwhelming unpredictability proves stressful enough so that the leading actors wish for more stable internal regulations to be able to run their chaos management industry. Indeed, every governance principle put in place since the very beginnings of Ouishare serves this stabilizing function; flexibility and democracy manifest in the possibility of constant re-negotiation of those rules.

In the end there still remains the contradiction that in case of a thoroughly structured organisation and society, the structure is designed to absorb, to a certain extent, the uncertainties and shocks coming from the wider environment, so that individuals can feel more secure inside it—meaning employment legislation, worker rights, social security systems and so on—and if in Ouishare everyone is a freelancer or entrepreneur, it opens the path to criticism on who or what can possibly absorb such fluctuations in this structure. As put eloquently by one of the interviewees,

It wants to be a collective group, and share the risks, but at the same time sometimes the pains stay at the individual level—[...] the responsibilities, or the pressures or the uncertainties, all these things end up being at an individual level. (B2)

As indicated previously in relation to trust based on faceless commitments (Giddens, discussed in Chapter 2.2.2), the last example demonstrates that the idea of a people and community based dynamic structure in its current state is not able to replace or compensate for the general system of social support provided by states, rules of taxation, health care,

social aid, and so on. This is also emphasised in other interviews (P1, B3, B4, B5). Therefore, despite the perceived lure of chaotic freedom, such an organisation can not offer satisfactory long-term commitment options for people in need of a steady income stream and mechanisms of social care.

4.3.4 Curiosity and experimentation

People of Ouishare are frequently labelled as curious, adventurous, open to experimentation, trying the impossible, and finding the next question to ask:

A 'ouishare person', if there's something really cool that pops up, like he'd go for it, you know, right? And not be like no-no-no, I'm not gonna take that risk [...] obviously there's many examples where that might not be the case, but I would just say that if I'm trying to caricature, that would sort of what I would... and trying to take on sort of impossible stuff (P1)

Curiosity is not inherent to everyone, and for someone used to the stable top-down structure of corporate relationships, it may be difficult to step out of it and take initiative:

It takes me time to arrive at this state of mind that if I want to do things, it's up to me to imagine and propose them (P6)²²

Indeed, for a “beginner in Ouishare” it is definitely easier to first join an existing project and get used to the culture of experimentation, and then embark on their own journey of inventions and discoveries, so to speak. The idea of Ouishare as a journey leads back to the explorer metaphor present in some self-descriptions:

It's an image that occurs to me - a little like explorers or sailors going somewhere without knowing exactly where it will be (P5)²³

The ship or explorer metaphor, similarly to the aspect of movement, again refers to the high proportion of randomness and intuition in the choices of the people in Ouishare. Often a direction is chosen without clearly explaining it to colleagues or the public. The explorer cannot have a very specific, deliverable goal, s/he is rather performing the initial mapping of an unknown region, resulting in a diversity of experiments and certain vagueness in their description. In other words, the unknown is also non-semiotic and must first be translated into the possibility of language, that is, into the metalanguage(s) comprehensible in the

²² “je pense que je mets du temps à me mettre dans cet état d'esprit que si je veux faire des choses c'est aussi à moi de les imaginer et de les proposer.” (P6)

²³ “c'est un l'image qui me vient comme ça - c'est un peu celle des explorateurs ou des marins qui vont quelque part sans savoir exactement où ce sera” (P5)

organisation and in society. Since Ouishare's motivation is to provoke dialogue between different parties, it needs to address the creation of a common language between the various new dialogue partners, which in turn often means reformulating existing cultural facts in a somewhat novel language and context.

From a personal perspective, Ouishare can be understood as a platform or environment for experimentation of one's own:

I think that for me Ouishare is, until now it has been a space for experimentation, and really really really accelerating learning personally and professionally. but I feel the stronger is the personal one. (B6)

[...] but when I came to OuiShare I discovered I could do things that I didn't know I could do; and also that people trust me. Not because of my background, but because of the potential they see I could have. (B1)

The opportunity for accelerated learning is something that is brought out quite a lot, recognizing that in such a crowd there is a chance to face new challenges that could not have been tried elsewhere. It creates an imagination of Ouishare as an experimental sandbox, as opposed to external or prior experience where such opportunities were more limited or impossible. Experimentation is also supported by the trust factor. And finally, if an organisation is made up of proactive people who want to quickly organise diverse projects without necessarily having the expertise nor an extensive budget, such a setting will naturally compel employing and trusting people regardless of their past experience.

4.3.5 Affect

Affect in Ouishare entails emotionality, playfulness, childlikeness (also seen as infantility), accepting people with emotions, and the fusion of work and play in the phatic channels and organisation in general.

As a very interesting aspect, several people mentioned in their stories “falling in love with” Ouishare, describing either their own affect or that of a friend (P2, B2, B5).

so when I met them [Ouishare] I completely fell in love because their pitch was completely different, it was much more positive. (B6)

maybe I fell in love with Ouishare so I don't see so many disadvantages, I need a bit of time to... (B1)

Ouishare and its people are generally described in affective terms (nice, amazing, cool etc):

it's a bunch of really nice and interesting people that I love [...] [B5]

There was very positive energy, very young and proactive and reflecting about things in a different way, which really connected, and which was more of a contagious than rational thinking about why we were there, or what do they do, actually. [...] (B2)

Also characterised to some extent by the mixing play and work factor, it is clear that the approach and attraction to Ouishare are based largely on affect rather than rationality, and it is a community that encourages affective behaviour.

Several interviewees bring out as a positive aspect about Ouishare (or as important in their own case) the idea of being passionate about one's work and "not just doing as job" (B3). This is seen as a quality setting Ouishare apart, as well as a self-motivational aspect for staying around Ouishare precisely because the organisation enables working with passion. The opposite is seen as emotionless or distanced. It is not so much that the other, traditional consultancies and companies are perceived as automated factories only labouring for money. One could say that, and more than a few interlocutors criticize their previous experience on that accord, but the underlying tone indicates rather the desire to see and understand people's motivation behind their choices beyond the need for income. Again, there is the will to reassess the rationales and justifications for the existing social order, and not just take it for granted.

I still don't get what it means to 'be professional'. For me, 'professional' means doing something not because you like it but because it just happened, because it has become automatic. For me... to become a professional is to distance yourself emotionally from your activity. For example, there are people who do their job very well despite personal problems. In fact for me it's a sort of detachment between your personal inner sentimental life and what you do; and I never managed to make the distinction. It's very childish but ... I do not want to be a 'professional'. (P4)²⁴

In this interpretation, it is understood that the emotionless 'professionalism' takes something away from the person or creates an artificial divide. Emotions are seen as being inherent to a person, and a desire is expressed to be integral with one's emotions and to express them. Previous, non-Ouishare experience (the other as a 'professional') is mapped as

²⁴ "Je n'ai toujours pas compris ce que ça voulait dire "être professionnel". Pour moi en fait 'professionnel' ça veut dire faire quelque chose pas parce que tu aimes le faire, faire quelque chose parce que c'est devenu. C'est devenu automatique de le faire. [...] Pour moi c'est.. de devenir professionnel, c'est mettre de la distance entre ses émotions et ce que tu fais. [...] Ou par exemple, il y a des gens qui sont très pro qui malgré... malgré des problèmes personnels, ils font leur travail très bien. En fait pour moi c'est une espèce de détachement entre ta vie personnelle sentimentale intérieure et ce que tu fais et trucs; et je n'ai jamais réussi à faire la distinction. C'est très enfantin mais... pour moi, je n'ai pas d'envie d'être un professionnel." (P4)

an undesirable environment hindering this possibility. This is related to the above-mentioned study of bereavement (Bauer & Murray 2018) which explores the possibilities of recognizing the importance of emotions and emotional labour in the workplace.

Affect is connected to the fusion of work and play in network sociality, reflected in “Play” as one of the first Ouishare values. People of Ouishare describe themselves as preferring the passionate approach to work and being demotivated to work on something that they do not understand or like. For some people, doing something repeatedly is boring and they look for ways to innovate and learn something new with every task (B3).

Maybe I'm very naive and immature in the sense that I'm really driven by passion and interest, and if I don't feel that I'm completely taken by the topic or something more, then I tend to be a little bit more passive. (P2)

The preference for interesting, meaningful work is here self-critically framed as “naive and immature”. However, the increasing technification and automation of societal processes, and the threat of losing jobs to the robots (a recurrent topic in contemporary media discourse) indeed raise questions about the types of work left that are suitable for people rather than machines. Imagining that all the boring, repetitive tasks can be automated, it is clear that people should be left with something more innovative, creative, flexible. On the other hand, the technological reality does not yet fully enable such dreams, explaining the emergence of platform economy that turns masses of people into effective cogs coordinated by algorithms of control and demand²⁵. This being one of the targets of criticism in Ouishare discourse²⁶, the natural choice is to wish for better self-realization for oneself and as the norm of society.

On the other hand, a considerable emotional investment creates risks of its own:

[In Ouishare] you're doing something that is something you really believe in, that you get a purpose out of, and so you put much more of yourself into it, than you would in a normal job, probably. Which also creates more risk in a way for yourself because you attach your whole self-worth and identity to the whole thing. So the stakes are higher for that not working or stopping it; 'cause it's like giving up yourself a bit (P1)

Indeed, the involvement into working life of previously unregulated aspects such as emotions and depth of commitment

This also explains how people are likely to get hurt in the chaotic environment. Having no guarantees of acceptance of themselves and their ideas, they may feel considerably worse when rejected or the project does not gain interest. They take it more personally, because the

²⁵ For example, Uber, Task Rabbit, Deliveroo and other platforms for on-demand services, blurring the understanding of employees, freelancers and corporate exploitation.

²⁶ <https://www.ouishare.net/article/so-long-collaborative-economy>

overall culture suggests that in Ouishare it is normal and even expected to approach issues on a more intimate level (with passion and emotions) than it would be elsewhere. At the same time, there are no defined activities or processes for solving the tensions created by such circumstances, or these are not intuitively accessible to everyone.

Overall it seems that a more favourable position is left for those who are capable for affect and passion, but able to retract at a critical moment and not to take things personally. It may be difficult to place the boundary for oneself, and the level of tolerance is probably individual for everyone.

4.4 The function of phatic technologies in Ouishare communication culture

In Ouishare, using digital technologies is the norm of organisational workflow management, as well as strongly imbued in the organisation culture in general. Since its early days, a significant part of internal and external communication has relied on social networking sites (Facebook groups, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp, Telegram) and digital workflow and knowledge mapping tools (Trello, Google Drive, Google Calendar, Wiki and Gitbook, later also Slack, Loomio and Cobudget). For a globally active organisation, there is no other easy, affordable and efficient way of assembly and governance meetings than video conferencing. Collaborative team work such as preparing documents can be carried out in Google Docs and Spreadsheets. Kanban-based tools borrowed from agile developments, such as Trello, can be comfortable means for project and task management.

Meanwhile, the informal sense of community can be maintained via constant emphatic and affective networking in Facebook or chat applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram. Being in touch with people all around the globe, being privy to their streams of event photos, reactions and discussions builds a sense of closeness and intimacy (see Wang et al. 2012: 85).

Where Jakobson (1960: 353) says that we could “hardly find verbal messages that would fulfill only one function,” it does not always seem to apply to non-verbal messages such as graffiti or emoji. In the context of digitally mediated communication and networked sociality, I would like to suggest that, in fact, there are many messages, both verbal and non-verbal, that carry overwhelmingly only the phatic function. Phatic dominant becomes necessary for the network, which is designed to thrive on maintaining relationships, as the primary tool and

function for relationship management. Phatic technologies are well suited for this behaviour, enabling not directly invasive ways of keeping in touch. While keeping up with information is hard or nearly impossible due to the constant flux and overload, it inevitably takes a secondary place after the phatic dominant.

So people who feel more at ease with the phatic, are better positioned in networked sociality, because the perfect undirected phatic does not expect a confirmation of reception from specific receivers (which it never designated), it is perfectly content in being directed simultaneously at everyone and no-one in particular, and it enables handling and deciphering meaning from reaction and non-reaction likewise²⁷.

4.4.1 Temporality of digital tools and protocols in Ouishare

The temporality of protocols or workflow rules and practices is something that strikes out for several interlocutors in Ouishare. It is perceived as “perpetual organising” (“I’m good at organising things, which is why ouishare is good for me, because I can perpetually organise things and it keeps getting disorganised again,” P1), as a necessity to over-coordinate (“[because of information overload] I spend a lot of time on work coordination, not actually doing work but just working to coordinate work. It’s also work, but you don’t feel like this is work,” B3), a lack of discipline (“the whole time management thing, I try to put more discipline in how we organise, how we plan projects, how we communicate; but the fact that that’s a mess all the time [...],” P2), or lack of surprise at an apparent failure to spread one’s idea (“just keep on going and you’ll do things. But don’t feel disappointed when something is not working, because it’s normal,” B1).

In line with “ever temporary standards” of network sociality, certain digital tools can go in or out of fashion. Sometimes it is caused by the composition and immediate working regulations of a project team—some people prefer Trello, others can manage their tasks in Google Docs or AirFlow, yet others find a new tool to explore. Whenever there is a new team formed, it will renegotiate its tools based on the new composition of people. At other times,

²⁷ The analysis in this chapter is partly based on interview citations from previous sections. For the overview of answers to questions on the phatic, see Annex 5.

the usage can be influenced by the general popularity or accessibility of the social network site.

And what is not working anymore, is the Global—Ouishare Global, almost nobody posts there. Facebook group. Why? I don't know. [...] Probably because it grew so big that the level of trust among the people might be less, or you don't know the people so you are more afraid of posting, or spamming people on things there. (B3)

The interviewee is reflecting on the decrease in popularity of the once lively global community group on Facebook platform. Extremely popular in 2012, nearly forgotten in 2017, it is hard to determine the exact reasons, as there are so many different variables, both external and internal. Facebook algorithm adjustment may have made it more difficult to reach the group posts; people may have become saturated with the social media in general; conversations died out naturally due to lack of reactions and interactions; most active people moved on to other projects; people stopped using Facebook for chatting and commenting because Ouishare started using Slack as a professional communication tool—the possibilities are endless.

4.4.2 Information and relationships as a commodity in Ouishare network

In Ouishare, relationships are easily seen as carrying value. Several interlocutors are citing the possibility to get valuable information (data) from all over the world as the main motivation for staying in the network.

I would say that my value as a professional consultant, a lot of it comes from the Ouishare network. In the network itself and around the network. By reading a lot of newsletters, [...] you get into this flow of information where you can get a lot of data, as long as you also contribute with data, that's my approach. [...] I think you need to find a balance, a personal balance on what you contribute and on what you get. People are very pragmatic in general, so you stay around, because you are probably getting more than you provide, or there is a fine balance at least on that respect. (B3)

Information-as-a-commodity provokes the sense of reciprocity: when a person feels they are receiving value by participating in online communication, they start feeling the need to reciprocate. This motivates the cultural norm of sharing and reacting at others' posts. Some people find it easy to comply with, others feel conflicted in their courage and determination to contribute to the information overflow. There are also some who express annoyance at the flux of messages, as it is energy-consuming to constantly follow the flow, and a large part of

the reactions not only carry phatic dominant, but often lack any other functions at all, such as emoji or animated GIF images.

In Ouishare, there is an invisible informational divide between ‘global’ people who travel around a lot, organising in and exchanging with multiple communities, and ‘local’ members who rarely go out of their own country or cultural neighbourhood, often lacking courage to initiate visible communication in online channels. Ouishare internal self-regulation (global governance) makes an effort to encourage open communication by suggesting tools and channels for overall use, however in reality the choice of channel is made quite casually among the people involved in the specific conversation. Project or interest groups tend to ‘move out of’ the global chatroom to a separate one in order to maintain coherence in their own topical discussion, and avoid disturbing everyone else (there are 100+ people in the global chat group). Sharing the link to the new chat becomes an entrance threshold, a point in chat history log. If missed, in order to still join the new sphere, one needs to go back to this point in time and space, while being aware that the branching happened in the first place, and/or know the people involved in it to make a direct request to one of them. There is also an option to query for the relevant information in the global chat, but this is perceived as somewhat intimidating and is rarely used.

From the perspective of the communicator (from the new sphere), despite the ideological openness as a principle, it is hard to judge which channel is the best option to make sure one’s message is received by relevant people. Therefore, the idea of open group messaging at times becomes a little like shouting in the marketplace or in the forest—one can be sure to have sent the message, but have no idea whether anyone ‘heard’, made sense of it, considered it important or meaningful. Phatic technologies reinforce the ambiguity of feedback (in a face to face setting, one would be able to judge the reception based on the listeners’ body language, for example). On the other hand, they provide a new way to respond in a purely phatic way with some meaning attached (positive emoji reactions). However, the details remain open to interpretation, and the meanings may vary depending on the closeness of chat partners (reactions from close ties or network hubs are perceived as more valuable) or the general mood or disposition of the sender or receiver (whether they attach great importance to phatic reactions or do not look at them at all).

The internal (semio)spheres in turn translate and exchange information across the internal borders, forming spaces of their own, which at times can be quite hermetic. For example, one

can miss an important piece of information because one was not reading the Telegram chat group in time or does not like to use Slack or Trello, but also because one was not present at an offline meeting or a half-formal chat.

4.4.3 Emoji use in Ouishare: trends and meanings

Contrary to the implicit focus on emoji categorization and vocabulary analysis in Danesi 2016, the case of Ouishare shows that even with a clear and culturally uniform emoji vocabulary (or perhaps due to it), the usage and application of meaning to specific emoji characters can be quite arbitrary and secondary. Eventually, it does not matter *which* emoji one uses, as long as one uses something in the first place. Therefore, most of the posts in the group chat containing or consisting of the emoji acquire primarily phatic dominant. And when looking at the opinion of *people don't know what you do unless you post about it* as a cultural norm for this organisation, the phatic dominant applies to majority of the posts. Posting becomes not so much about *I post to inform you*, but rather *I post, therefore I exist*.

Meanwhile the implicit assumption is, of course, that one should have (meaningful, informational) things to post about, such as articles of interest, projects, or achievements. The internal culture is therefore perceived as everyone working, acting, and achieving at a fast speed, with an intensity the newcomers find hard to keep up with, in addition to being confused as to the logic behind the selection of themes of importance.

Danesi goes at great lengths to determine the informational properties and qualities of emoji code, while in the context of network sociality it is clear that emoji serves primarily the phatic function. Especially looking at the majority of reactions to digital social media posts, it becomes a sign of keeping in touch, regardless of the content or specific emoji used. Therefore it is unfruitful to pose the question on how it would inevitably revolutionize our way of using language—it will not. It is simply a much more economic and convenient way of saying something in the lines of: “Hi, I noticed your post and wanted to let you know that I paid attention to it, or to you, for that matter; and that you may be on to something here; or maybe I’m just doing this because I want you to be aware than in a very ephemeral manner, I’m here for you. Or that I exist and grace this network with my presence, and it looks like you do, too. Or whatever.”

The informational, emotive, contextual interpretation of the 👍 or its derivatives is left completely up to the person receiving it. It will depend on the habitual communication and interaction patterns of both sides, their cultural backgrounds, in-group culture, and eventually, on the social contract between the two, or the pure imagination of either. It has a meaning and does not have it at the same time. It can be deemed significant, or remain unnoticed. Figuratively, a “like” is Schrödinger’s paradox manifest in language: it possesses all the simultaneous meanings (or lack thereof) applied by its spectators in their amorphous unpredictability, and holds them both true and/or mistaken without a temporal limit.

In a deeper and darker web, individuals’ sampled phatic interactions have already been used to map their social and cultural preferences, in order to micromanage their digital social information stream, and feed them politically loaded marketing cues²⁸.

To provide an answer to Danesi’s inconclusive debate on whether in the emoji we see a passing trend or “a new form of global writing” (Danesi 2016: 182), I would argue for neither of those two. Rather, it is a re-awakened form of phatic function communicable in written messages. I doubt that it will be passing because as Danesi himself convincingly shows, it is nothing new, but merely a resurrection of rebus and Middle Age book illustrations. And the manner in which the emoji are used is more dependent on the specific group culture than the code itself. That is something that remains invident to Danesi on the basis of his culturally homogenous sample group that uses emoji functionally only within friendship paradigms. Contrastingly, in Ouishare groups the emoji code, although infused with informality and friendliness, has nevertheless been brought into the context of organisational and work-related communication, providing—among other purposes—a necessary tool for maintaining relationships in digital, networked sociality.

²⁸ Hereby I am referring to the 2018 data scandal of Facebook and Cambridge Analytica, where the latter was accused of influencing election results with targeted advertising on social networks.

Conclusion

This thesis analysed the working principles of an unstructured, non-hierarchical and hybrid organisation Ouishare. Being currently one of the few analyses using the methods of cultural semiotics to study organisations, it contributed to creating a new perspective to balance the amount of structuralist research in the field. The thesis was divided into two major parts, one presenting the theory of novel hybrid organisations in the context of wider social change (network sociality paradigm), and the other analysing Ouishare organisation with the introduced concepts and methods.

In the first chapter, I reviewed the background of organisational studies and the position of semiotics in the discipline, indicating the tension between structuralist and dynamic approaches to organisations and the appeal expressed in the field for balancing the static models with the study of processes. I gave an overview of the field of organisational semiotics and showed how it contributes rather to the structuralist approach.

The second chapter was dedicated to the theoretical part of my work. First I discussed Andreas Wittel's paradigm of network sociality and related concepts as to give a wider understanding of the sociocultural context that has emerged in relation to the new digital technologies, at least among a certain demographic group ("new middle class") that Ouishare members fit into. Secondly, I introduced certain semiotic models as a means to study organisations. I focused on Juri Lotman's concepts of self-description and semiosphere as a way to spatially organise the meaningful world of an organisation, especially via centre-periphery dynamics and Self-Other differentiation. Self-description was also shown as a way for an individual to combine a narrative identity out of the data-based network sociality knowledge and information elements, thus regaining a sense of understanding and organising the chaotic surroundings. Additionally, I paid attention to the phatic dominant in digitally

mediated communication, referring to its increasing importance and spread from the private sphere to the workplace.

My analysis of Ouishare self-descriptions was based on participant interviews, the method of conducting and analysing of which I described in the third chapter. The fourth chapter presented the analysis from different perspectives, looking at the aspects in self-descriptions such as the fluid and indeterminate identity of the organisation, the constitution of the Other to improve the sense of Self, and the importance of information in Ouishare semiosphere.

In the course of analysis, there emerged a five-dimensional self-descriptive model that I called “Ouishare dominants,” indicating the relational scales that interlocutors used to position themselves and the descriptive ideals in the organisational space (semiosphere). These five dominants were compiled on the basis of conversation results, mapping the more frequent images of the organisational culture in five different categories—trust, movement, unpredictability, experimentation, affect. The analysis of Ouishare dominants was to provide the reader with a mental mapping of the organisational semiosphere as perceived by its members, and demonstrate the Self—Other and centre—periphery dichotomies as flexible scales enabling the mental-spatial positioning of the Self. Drawing out the dichotomies of the dominants offered further clarity on the organisational identity as a community based on trust, movement and experimentation, with a high level of (internal) unpredictability tolerance and emotional involvement (affect). It also clarified the description of the Other for Ouishare as a traditional, hierarchical organisation with crystallised working practices, typically lacking the five dominants perceived as present and important in Ouishare. The subsection on phatic technologies and emoji usage showed digital communication and collaboration tools as an important part of Ouishare identity and working culture, with the phatic and affective elements (such as emoji) crossing over from the private to the workspace, further blurring the boundary between the two.

The study provided the following answers to my research questions. 1) The collective self-description of Ouishare, as well as individual identities inside it are constructed, as predictable by the concept of narrative identity, by re-organising elements of knowledge into a narrative and contrasting it/them with previous or expected experience (the “repositories of normality”). The available elements of organisational working practices are perceived as confusing and diverse when contrasted with the expectations, a situation accounting for the

variety of self-descriptions in Ouishare that do not always match with each other and give an impression of individuals positioned in dissimilar zones of expectation, engagement, interest and contentment.

2) The contrasting experience or the Other for Ouishare is conceptualised in general terms as “traditional”, meaning the corporate, hierarchical and stable-structured business and consultation companies where the perceived freedom of action (in other words, agency) is significantly smaller compared to Ouishare. In such organisations, the meaningfulness of the activity in the context of societal problems and technological change is perceived as not sufficient to the interlocutors, which in many cases is the reason they turn to Ouishare as a different kind of dialogue facilitator around such issues.

3) Phatic systems and practices account for the relative ease of communication and maintaining trust across a diverse global group of 60–150 people from 20 countries on 4 continents, enabling an unassuming way to stay connected across distance and without meeting each other. Such a manner of exchange produces also problems for connectivity and engagement levels, leading to information overload and the sense of uncertainty in contributing on the sender’s part, especially if it is a person newly integrated into the network or not feeling at ease with cyber communication. Additional tension is added by the sense of commodified relationships in information exchange, leading to people feeling inner compulsion to reciprocate by sharing or reacting to others’ posts. Phatic systems also create a new informational divide between different groups based on their preference for specific tools or offline over online exchange, and may thus exclude some people from information flows and the digitally mediated social space.

4) The perceived meaning of phatic-dominant messages (such as emoji or “likes”) is related to the context and the aspect of staying in touch or being in the picture, rather than their specific meanings derived from the accompanying informational content (such as the specific emoji image). Positive phatic reactions are predominantly perceived as instances of social support, being in the picture, feedback that the message was noticed, read or approved, and as an encouragement to stay involved. In the case of a noticeable lack of reaction, it may be interpreted as a lack of interest from the community and general discouragement, or it may not be considered significant at all, depending on the disposition of the post author. As a result of the blurred and highly context-specific meaning-making, the phatic function also starts to dominate in other types of messages.

Practical applications of these findings include developing tools and exercises for organisational managers, leaders and members to reflect on identity, engagement and one's placement in their organisations. Such tools, combined with the theoretical discussion, can be used as models for collective and inclusive construction of identity, as well as individual and collective empowerment techniques. The interview method itself, as the formation of a self-descriptive narrative can be used as a low-stress, high-empathy model for professional development or mentoring interview. Additionally, the results of such interviews can be combined into sincere and direct feedback about the organisational issues, provided they are treated with confidentiality and trust.

In general, the model of self-description can function as a stabilising mechanism for collective identity in contemporary fast-paced information society. Semiosphere can act as a spatial organiser for disembodied elements such as values and aspects of identity, by visualising and organising the immaterial aspects of culture in any organisation, both internally to build cohesion, and externally to facilitate public relations and communication management.

An additional function and value of such exercises is to provide tools for personal empowerment in an organisational context. The regained sense of agency will already be achieved by virtue of invitation to construct one's own narrative of the organisation, based on the selection among the available elements of knowledge (data) and life experiences. A similar exercise can be used to analyse other types of organisations. It can be especially valuable in hybrid networks operating on multiple involvement and contribution levels, such as volunteer, paid, full-time and part-time workers.

The theoretical value of this work lies in widening the scope of research objects for the semiotics of culture, and offering concrete application of Lotman's models in a new study area. It outlines a broader view of digitally mediated culture and communication and initiates a dialogue between semiotics, sociology and organisation studies in this aspect. The individual questions asked in this thesis can be further addressed in more in-depth studies, moving beyond the scope of a Master's Thesis. The collected material (interviews) allows for highlighting additional aspects of digitally mediated identities, phatic dominant in personal and professional communication, and the rising role of emotions in the 21st century workplace. There is also a potential for a comparative analysis of a "traditional organisation", and many others, to find out whether the five dominant aspects of Ouishare culture are present

everywhere (and likely connected to the greater paradigm of network sociality) or whether they vary and differ significantly in other types of organisations.

Finally, this thesis contributes to the understanding that there is no single ‘correct’ description of Ouishare—everyone is free to construct their own description, build their own narrative out of all the available interactions and data elements. Only then, in a complex and continuously negotiable multilogue with other (self-)descriptions, can the narrative become shared, intersubjective. It will, however, always remain subject to further change.

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Kokkuvõte

Käesolev magistritöö “Enesekirjeldus ja faatiline funktsioon organisatsioonikultuuris: Ouishare’ juhtumianalüüs” pakub välja konkreetse semiootika mudelitel (J. Lotmani semiosfääri ja kultuuri enesekirjelduse mõistetel) põhineva organisatsioonikultuuri uurimise raamistiku, millel on nii teoreetiline kui praktiline väärtus. Antud mudelid võimaldavad visualiseerida kultuuri mittemateriaalseid elemente ning luua neist visuaalseid kooslusi, mis omakorda aitavad kultuuri kandjatel — organisatsiooni liikmetel — paigutada end organisatsiooni “sfääris” ruumiliselt keskuse ja perifeeria suhtes. Organisatsioon muutub staatilisest struktuurist dünaamiliseks, elavaks ning pidevas liikumises olevaks kultuuriruumiks, kus iga elemendi fikseeritava paigutuse leidmine ei ole enam eeldatav norm. Selline kujutus kirjeldab staatilistest mudelitest paremini tänapäevaseid ülidünaamilisi ja hübriidseid organisatsioone ning aitab mõista nende toimimise põhimõtteid. Siin sobivad näiteks vabatahtlike töö põhinevad ja/või asukohasõltumatuid töötajaid kasutavad grupid, aga ka laiemalt kõik organisatsioonid, mille liikmed rohkemal või vähemal määral puutuvad töö- või eraelus kokku globaalse infoühiskonna elementidega. Antud lähenemine võimaldab avada uusi tahke tüüpilise organisatsiooni kollektiivse identiteedi, kultuuri ja infovälja uurimisel kasvõi seetõttu, et varasemad meetodid ei pööra sellele nii terviklikku ja inimkesket tähelepanu.

Töö on jaotatud kahte peamisse osasse: teooria ja analüüs. Esimene peatükk annab ülevaate senistest uuringutest organisatsioonide, organisatsioonikultuuri ja semiootika puutepunktis ning positioneerib käesoleva uurimuse nende suhtes kui staatiliste mudelite rohkuses tasakaalustavalt dünaamilist lähenemist pakkuva. Teine peatükk esitab teoreetilise raamistiku, paigutades semiosfääri, enesekirjelduse ja faatilise kommunikatsiooni mõisted Andreas Witteli *network sociality* (võrgustikusotsiaalsus) taustsüsteemi. Viimane aitab mõtestada digitaalselt vahendatud kommunikatsiooni kasvuga seotud uudset sotsiokultuurilist

konteksti ning sellest kujunevat uut demograafilist rühma (haritud ja digitaalse kirjaoskusega “uus keskklass”), mille hulka kuuluvad ka Ouishare’ liikmed. Eraldi tähelepanu on pööratud faatilisele funktsioonile kommunikatsioonis, mille osatähtsus on viimasel ajal suurenenud seoses faatiliste tehnoloogiate laia kasutuselevõttuga (Facebook, Twitter jmt). Samuti on faatiline dominant liikunud erasfäärast töösfääri, hajutades töö- ja eraelu vahelisi piire, mis toob kaasa uusi pingeid.

Töö analüüsiosa vaatleb Ouishare’ organisatsiooni erinevate semiootiliste mudelite abil. Ouishare on Prantsusmaalt 2012.a ühise jagamismajanduse huvi tõttu alguse saanud rahvusvaheline võrgustik, mille liikmeid ühendavad tänaseks ühised väärtused ning soov mõista ja lahendada sotsiaalseid probleeme, mida toob kaasa tehnoloogia kiire areng. Organisatsioonil on 60 aktiivset liiget (Connectors) 20 riigis üle maailma ning suuremad kogukonnad erinevates linnades. Analüüsi aluseks on 12 osalusintervjuud organisatsiooni liikmetega Pariisi ja Barcelona kogukondadest. Üksikasju ja vastavat metoodikat kirjeldab kolmas peatükk.

Neljandas peatükis annan ülevaate grupist selle liikmete enesekirjelduste ja semiosfääri mudeli kaudu ning analüüsin faatiliste tehnoloogiate ja sõnumite kasutust ja mõistmist kogukonnas. Eraldi alapeatükk on pühendatud “Ouishare’ dominantidele”. Need on viis aspekti, mis tulid intervjuudes korduvalt esile — usaldus, liikumine, kaosetaluvus, uudishimu ja afekt — ning mida võib tinglikult mõista kui Ouishare organisatsiooni enesekirjelduslikku ideaali või organisatsioonikultuuri sobitumiseks vajalikke eeldusi. Intervjueeritavad paigutavad end neil viiel skaalal organisatsiooni info- ja kultuuriruumis keskuse ja perifeeria suhtes, andes ühtlasi hinnanguid ideaalse ja mitteideaalse paigutuse osas.

Töö praktiline väärtus seisneb organisatsioonide uurijate ja haldajate tööriistakasti suurendamises semiootiliste mudelitega. Näiteks on enesekirjeldusel põhinev narratiiviloome kasutatav arenguestluse jõustava alternatiivina, motiveerides inimest ise defineerima oma paigutust organisatsiooni tegevusruumis. Teoreetilises perspektiivis pakub töö semiootilisi tõlgendusi digisotsiaalsusega kaasnevatele eelistele ja probleemidele. Antud töö tulemustele toetudes on edaspidistes uurimustes võimalik näiteks käsitleda lisanduvaid aspekte identiteedi ja enesekirjelduste küsimustest, teha võrdlevaid uuringuid “tavaliste” organisatsioonidega ning analüüsida põhjalikumalt faatilise funktsiooni rolli professionaalses kommunikatsioonis.

Annexes

Annex 1. List of interviewees

Interview questions about identity and self-description	
P1-P6	6 freelancers and entrepreneurs living and working mainly in Paris, interacting with Ouishare Paris community
B1-B6	6 freelancers and entrepreneurs living and working mainly in Barcelona, interacting with Ouishare Catalunya community
Interview questions about phatic communication habits	
X1-X5	Selection of interviewees from above who answered the second set of questions regarding the phatic function, either during the same conversation or at another time. The structure of the talk was to enable the separation of the second set of answers.

Annex 2. Interview questions

2.1 Questions on identity and self-description

Questions about Ouishare identity and the positioning of the individual inside the organisation

1. How did you meet Ouishare?
2. What is Ouishare for you / in your opinion?
3. What are “Ouishare people” like? How would you describe them?
(And how would you describe the others / non-Ouishare people?)
4. What are, in your opinion, the advantages and disadvantages of being an organisation such as Ouishare?
5. What is Ouishare good for? (for you, for the world, ...)
6. Who has power in Ouishare? (*added later*)

As a final question

7. Is there anything else you would like to say, in relation to our discussion?

2.2 Questions on phatic communication

Questions about attitude towards and individual’s participation in phatic communication, based on a selection of channels enabling phatic-dominant messages (Telegram Global channel + local groups; Facebook groups; less about Slack and Loomio)

1. How much do you use social media channels such as Facebook or Telegram? (In general, and in OuisShare)
2. What kind of things do you usually post and why?
3. What kind of things do you react at?
4. How do the reactions make you feel? (e.g. when someone reacts to your post)
5. When you see previous reactions to the post, does this affect your own reaction, and how?
6. (Have you noticed inside jokes in OuisShare channels / do you participate in them / how does it make you feel?)

As a final question

7. Is there anything else you would like to say, in relation to our discussion?

Annex 3. Ouishare overview

3.1 Legal bodies²⁹

France

2012 May – OuiShare Association (Association Loi 1901, Intérêt Général (NGO)), founded by Antonin Léonard, Benjamin Tincq, Flore Berlingen, Edwin Mootoosamy

2015–2016 CEP (Collaborative Event Production) - for-profit association to support commercial activities (OuiShare Fest, sponsors etc)

2016– OuiShare Foundation, Fonds de Dotation

2016– OuiShare Expérience (SAS), structure for conducting for-profit/business activities, with OuiShare Association being its sole shareholder

Spain

2014– OuiShare España, NGO

Germany

2016– OuiShare Deutschland (NGO/association), founded in Munich by David Weingartner, Francesca Pick, Sarah Eisenmann, Ulrich Bareth, Conor Trawinski, Thomas Dönnebrink, Andreas Arnold, Joachim Lohkamp, Antares Reisky

United Kingdom

2016– [OuiShare U.K. Ltd](#) (Private company limited by guarantee without share capital), with Elena Giroli as Director / major shareholder

Québec, Canada

2016– OuiShare Québec (association/NGO), founded in Montréal

Brasil

2017– OuiShare Brasil (association), founded in Rio de Janeiro

Chile

2018 March– OuiShare Chile (NGO)

²⁹ List of legal entities as of 2018, based on <https://handbook.ouishare.net/ouishare-legal-entities>

3.2 Ouishare values 2012 & 2018

Values in 2012 as listed in the previous Ouiki (Ouishare wiki)³⁰

The values listed below were defined during the second international OuiShare Summit in Rome, on November 2012, and serve as guideline for our action.

- 1. Openness.** We strongly believe that a culture of openness has many benefits. OuiShare is a non-hierarchical organization, which anyone can join and contribute to. Decision-making is based on peer governance and meritocracy. What we produce is open source, making it easy to reuse, remix and share alike.
- 2. Transparency.** As an open organization, it is our priority for everyone to understand what we do, how we work and how we are funded. As we grow, our aim is to disclose all information in a reader-friendly fashion.
- 3. Independence.** We are happy to work with companies on individual projects, but do not enter exclusive partnerships of any kind that could compromise our independence. You may not like this at first, but in the long term you'll see the benefits.
- 4. Impact.** Our mission is stated as "to accelerate the shift toward a more collaborative economy". Maximum impact in doing this is what ultimately guides our actions.
- 5. MPRL (Meet People In Real Life).** Amazing things happen in real-life. The internet cannot replace real-life interactions; it is only a tool that supports them.
- 6. Action.** We don't like talk without action. When you have a great idea, don't wait for others to execute. Build something yourself from day one and watch people join you!
- 7. Permanent beta.** OuiShare is an ongoing experiment with a lean startup approach. With curiosity and an open mindset, we strive to continuously try new things and challenge our assumptions. Release early, fail often, learn by doing and iterate.
- 8. Feedback.** Regular and personal feedback is critical to sustaining the participative dynamic of OuiShare and enabling everyone to learn and progress. This is why we praise valuable contributions, celebrate achievements and encourage constructive criticism.
- 9. Inclusion.** Innovation happens in diverse environments. OuiShare benefits from having members across the globe and from very different backgrounds: entrepreneurs, designers, makers, hackers, social innovators, environmentalists, researchers, journalists, public officials, activists, and many more.
- 10. Play.** Work doesn't have to be boring. We want collaborative lifestyles to go viral, and believe that this can only be achieved if work is as fun and creative as play.

³⁰ Accessible via web archive at

http://web.archive.org/web/20140926094720/ouiki.ouishare.net/index.php?title=The_10_OuiShare_Values

Ouishare values in 2017³¹

The list of values after a collaborative re-negotiation process in 2017, as presented in Ouishare Handbook.

Permanent Beta

- Always a work in progress.
- Learn by doing, improve by reflecting, giving feedback and iterating.
- Keep playing

Do-ocracy

- Don't wait to Do good.
- Celebrate autonomy and initiative-taking within an interdependent network.
- Actions speak louder than words.

Openness

- Open-minded: Open to new ideas.
- Inclusiveness: Open to diverse people with diverse perspectives.
- Transparency: Open access to inner workings and open decision making
- OpenSource: We share.

Collaboration

- Together we go further.
- Magic happens when we meet in real life.

Care

- Care of your own journey,
- Care for each other,
- Care for the commons and for the planet.
- Three legs of a single stool.

³¹ <https://handbook.ouishare.net/the-ouishare-values>

Annex 4. Interview citations: coded results of identity and self-description

4.1 Citations for network sociality

Codes are from Wittel's (2001) conceptual structuration of network sociality

I. Individualization

A. Ever temporary standards and protocols

1. trying to make Ouishare work [is] a thing that will never be done [---] I'm good at organising things, which is why Ouishare is good for me, because I can perpetually organise things and it keeps getting disorganised again. But it's also super super tiring. And it never lasts. (P1)
2. a lot of energy and money and resources lost in that chaos, a lot, that's frustrating [---] And the whole time management thing, I try to put more discipline in how we organise, how we plan projects, how we communicate; but the fact that that's a mess all the time, right, like if it's e-mail, if it's slack, if it's over coffee break, if it's over a phone call; all of that, to follow up projects, yeah, I find it exhausting as well. And I've tried to tell them like we should put in place new tools, to track all projects and everything, but... it's against Ouishare to sort of impose this kind of tools, so... (P2)
3. we wanted to [do a project]. And I said, okay I have this idea, and I can help anyone who wants to lead it, but I don't have time to lead it. At the end everybody thought it was a good idea, but we couldn't find this person who have time to do that. It's a good idea, we couldn't make it, and it's there, maybe in the future. It's good for me, it's not a fail, like maybe .. with X I was telling [about this] and [s]he was like: but you didn't make it. And I was like: but I don't mind if I didn't make it now, maybe I can make it after, or I can make it differently, or I can make it for another project.. But it's okay, because at least you have the perspective of how people feel, if they feel comfortable, and that's enough for me. It was a trial and it worked, now we have to develop it. I don't know how to define this concept, but it's like .. just keep on going and you'll do things. But don't feel disappointed when something is not working, because it's normal. (B1)

II. Ephemeral & intense relations

A. Ephemeral & intense encounters

1. I think there's something very random about it, also - that it's like randomly being in places, just because... you're not really sure why specifically people are there. [---] random, but also for a reason.(P1)
2. Pour moi la force de Ouishare équipe [---] c'est mettre les gens en connexion. c'est dire: tiens, tu parles avec lui. (P4)
3. And at a personal level, you meet many people. (B2)
4. we really have this, .. very particular perspective that you land in a city and you can find.. You can meet with people from Ouishare to have drinks or you will be working ... You're here, you're there, this is also quite impressive. (B3)

B. Integration & disintegration

1. all the opportunities, it was like: how is this possible that in such a short time I have the possibility to do all these things? (B1)
2. there were a few events, and what was really easy, was to continue engaging with the local community in [city], for example. (B2)
3. For me at least the way I approach is to have this Ouishare impact on people, and then they decide to stay or they decide to go [---] that's the beauty also to some extent of the network, people come, people stay, people leave, that's fine. (B3)
4. I think for people to pass through, and for organisations, you see it even with companies and public administrations, that they want to be close , too, because it you a point of view which is rich, right. (B2)

C. Movement (of people and ideas)

1. the main thing I can identify is lots of movement all the time [...] it's sort of like... you pull a string and it just keeps coming, it's never gonna... one thing always leads to more things, a network kind of thing. There's like this pool you just keep swimming through, and you just keep discovering other things. (P1)
2. vraiment ce qui me saute aux yeux c'est la temporalité. Je vois des gens comme X, je vois des gens comme Y - n'en parlons même pas de façon on les voit jamais - ils sont toujours dans un projet. Dans une conférence, dans un événement, voilà on dit ça, on fait ça, on lance ça. [...] Du coup à l'heure actuelle...Je ne sais pas quoi faire avec cette vague, avec ce mouvement. (P4)

D. The ephemerality of interest

1. we're always in the new thing that's coming, as soon as something gets too known, people get bored with it (P1)
2. When I'm really bored is when I'm doing the same thing twice. (B3)
3. High practical sense in that they wanna be in a lot of things at the same time. I wouldn't say having problems focusing on one thing, more just ... (P2)

III. From narrative to information

A. Information flows & access to them

1. Sometimes, it could be that it's difficult to understand for example what other people are doing, or what are the projects going on, or how can you be involved on it. So you have to be really keeping in line with what's happening in Loomio or otherwise you miss things. But I think it's normal, you just have to be really active on looking what's happening, so when you see the opportunity, you join in. otherwise .. yeah that's a disadvantage. (B1)
2. the advantages for me are clear: it's the level of access you have to information, and to different points of view. The flow of information that is generated. (B3)

B. Social relations based on an exchange of data and 'catching up'; commodification of social relationships

1. Sometimes it's hard to concentrate and do actual work, but.. (why?) because people are so nice, and you want to talk to them... have a coffee, discuss interesting things, there's always something interesting to talk about, comment or discuss or share... so yeah for me the risk of coming to the

office is like.. I wanna socialize. And then I feel frustrated that I can't work, and even if I wanna work I have to like lock myself in a meeting room.. (P2)

2. Pour moi la force de Ouishare équipe. Qui est antinomique. C'est de savoir, forcer un peu mais sans forcer, sans être agressif, amener aux gens les nouvelles idées, les trucs et mettre les gens en connexion. c'est dire Tiens tu parles avec lui. (P4)
3. I would say that my value as a professional consultant, a lot of it comes from the Ouishare network. In the network itself and around the network. By reading a lot of newsletters, [---] you get into this flow of information where you can get a lot of data, as long as you also contribute with data, that's my approach. (B3)

C. Connecting people as one of the main activities

1. we can bridge a lot of other networks [---] We are able to have this strong connection with all the networks which might be similar but not the same as we are, and we get their point of view and they get ours, and I think that's for me one of the key elements and the things I enjoy in Ouishare (B3)
2. *What is Ouishare good for?*
Connecting people! I actually do think it's connecting people. I think that's.... like Nokia. [---] It started with this (???) group and then organising the Fest and all these events, and all this international network, I think the common trend, it's connecting people. In real life. Not always, but most of the time. (P2)

IV. Assimilation of work and play

A. Combination of work and play

1. We went to one event, and we ended up having dinner with the people of Ouishare. And we didn't know how and we were there, hahaha, we have a beer, we have another one... (B2)
2. So basically I was [...] on vacation, [...], and that's where I actually met most of the [Ouishare] people. [---] They were just hanging out. [...] it was all like just very fun, I would say. (P1)

B. Intensification of work

1. But sometimes it is also exhausting. I don't realise but working at a weekend, in the long run, is like (sighs) there's never a break... [---] So it's sort of this double edged sword that they promise you flexibility, and it takes over a lot. Because I have no boundaries, so I can work on Saturdays and Sundays without a problem. But in the long run, sacrificing, I don't know... Sometimes I feel like I'm obliged to work on weekends... One, to keep up with all the activity and stuff, and get things done, but because I can work from home sometimes, and work in [another city], I feel like at least they're doing me a favour, that freedom, so I have to pay back by working and not complaining. So yeah, it's freedom with a price. So far yes, I'm willing to pay for it. In a year, we'll see. (P2)
2. But I think we are pretty far now, that it's part of the new reality, and we need to understand, how to cope with this needs from other people, and maybe set up your own rules, like maybe on Sundays and on Saturdays I don't work. There should not be expectations of me replying on weekends. Okay, I haven't set these expectations, I'm really quite available on weekends for stuff, so... and again, that's a personal choice. And I do that,

and I think a lot of people do this because we have so much fun in Ouishare. If it were to be a boring thing, you'd stop it (laughs). (B3)

3. to me, there's definitely some "Ouishare identity", there's a personality that's definitely something very playful, and childish, that's part of that, and also jumping onto opportunities, getting over-excited very easily. [Ouishare is] over-excitable, a bit naive or impulsive. [---] over-hastily jumping onto things, which is really cool, and creates all these opportunities, but a bit like chaotic, right. I think chaos is a pretty important aspect. (P1)

C. Play enhancing creativity and experimentation

1. In Ouishare you don't have a job description, you just make your own. So it gives you a lot of freedom to explore, to try things, and this is what I really have appreciated of Ouishare so far. That I'm doing that with other people, not just alone, so it can feel a little bit lonely, so you are surrounded by people who are in a similar journey. (B3)
2. So Ouishare really is more distributed and all over the place and that's why I would say Ouishare can move mountains more easily, like mobilise just shit ton of people to do weird stuff (P1)
3. [after the collaborative economy interest] then they started like: we can explore anything else, it gave them a lot of opportunities, it's very interesting, because now it's up to each individual or community to sort of push the direction they're going [---]... now we can go anywhere we want! (P2)
4. it's a bit of a bubble to try things and to explore things. Doesn't matter if you don't have experience on that, you will do Ouishare and you'll do it. (B1)
5. Good sides of Ouishare I would say: for sure, the experimentation level, how much you try things, and the capacity of the organisation to try, go back, and change in action, in this sense - wow. (B2)

V. Technology

A. Personal relationships as a valuable resource

1. global network, I think this is the best outcome of Ouishare, on one hand, the personal connections, the network. [---] the more valuable thing in Ouishare is the connections among people. (B3)

B. relationship management technologies

1. *Examples of all (phatic) technologies Ouishare uses*

4.2 Citations and codes for Ouishare self-description

	eva des self -de scri ptio n	(sel f-)re flexi vity	und erst and worl d	cha nge the syst em	no hier arc hy	ope n	flexi bilit y	dial ogu e	criti cal	self -de velo pm ent/ chal len ge	acc ele rat ed lear nin g	exp eri me ntat ion
it has been a great opportunity for me, because I really developed a lot myself personally and professionally thanks to OuiShare. [---] To grow personally and professionally,[...] Also to learn about to think differently.(B1)									X	X		
A comfortable place to do different things and to challenge yourself. For me. (pause.) A warm place (laughs).										X		X
I think it's good for the world to have organisations like OuiShare, to make this effort, in terms of explaining in general, although they don't know how to explain themselves (laughs). B2	X		X									
It's a group of people who are really interested in understanding the world and changing it, and who are willing to not only think about how to change the system but about how they organise themselves for changing the system. [...] There's also the experience of belonging to an organisation that is creating itself. Where the willingness is to have no hierarchy, to be very open, to have all these values that allows it to adapt to whatever the people who are involved, want it to be.(B2)		X	X	X	X	X	X					
It's an organisation that allows you to continuously learn and continue developing yourself, which is very positive [...] it opens you, it gives you all the tools, it's kind of a platform if you want to grow on top of it [---] working inside with the risks that it takes to try experiences you've never tried before [...] there's this willingness to ensure that you can grow personally, and then there are the constraints that the world give us. (B2)										X		X
Ouishare tends to be very good at communicating, so i think... communicating like explaining the collaborative economy with all its complexity, for example, to outsiders. [...] building a narrative that makes it simpler but without losing the complexity (B2)			X					X				
I would say that the learning processes are fast.											X	
And we are—at least I try not to be seen as a radical of anything, so I just help to reflect on things. And I don't have a strong position on how to handle some of these debates, I say: just be aware of this, just be aware of that, and look at this, look at that and look at the third option, because the answer is not obvious. (B3)		X	X				X	X				
you are doing things that you've never done before, or you are working with some people doing some stuff that nobody has done before, so that's really challenging situation										X		X
super active people who speak languages, who travel a lot, who have this critical point of view on things (B3)									X			

	eva des self -de scri ptio n	(sel f-)re flexi vity	und erst and worl d	cha nge the syst em	no hier arc hy	ope n	flexi bilit y	dial ogu e	criti cal	self -de velo pm ent/ chal len ge	acc ele rat ed lear nin g	exp eri me ntat ion
we want to change things, we don't want them, we don't want to have them the way they are, and that's what we have in common, is how we want to change it.				X								
I think the type of profile of people in Ouishare, and it's not like just two people in the team but in the general ecosystem, people very very curious about the world, very entrepreneur, very optimistic, and I think willing to change. willing to make an effort to change things, and people who wanted challenge the reality.			X	X								
as long as I thought that I was learning at a much faster pace than I would in a more traditional job, I kept going for staying in Ouishare. And the idea was like accelerated learning curve... (P1)										X	X	
ouishare is a space, ouishare is holding space for people to come in and confront themselves with themselves (P1)										X		
I find it hilarious that no-one does [understand what Ouishare is]. I thought I was the dumb one, but when I discovered that it's like a common joke for everyone to not know what we do... (P2)	X											
it's an NGO, with an interest in topics like The future of work, new models of organisations, trying to rethink structures, and experiment. Then I get a weird look and people stop asking questions. (P2)									X			X
But the interesting thing is that there is reflexivity. [...] And this is something very noble, very appreciable within Ouishare. I like that. I like hindsight: all the people in this group think, and ask questions, they are in doubt—is this good, is it good to do like this... (P4)		X						X				
For me, the strength of Ouishare team [...] is in knowing how to introduce people to new ideas, and connect them, even if a bit forcibly, but without being aggressive (P4)								X				
I find the interesting part is that it's not just about tolerance, it's also about the debate, about the conversation and not just the juxtaposition of texts. Eventually, there is a dialogue, even if people do not agree [with each other] (P5)								X				

4.3 Citations for identity: Ouishare vs Other

	Ouishare	traditional / Other
P1		And usually, someone who wasn't "Ouishare spirit", someone who was out for his own advantage only, not cool, not nice, not being that open, and [...] looking much more out for yourself than the collective [...]. If you're being super commercial, that's definitely a no-go. [...] It's definitely no problem that you wanna have a business and you wanna make money, nothing wrong with that, but it's something about the way you go about it, and the way you're pushing your product on someone else—that's definitely not Ouishare spirit. (P1)
P2	I think one of the things that drew us all together was sort of this need to break away from traditional organisations, that's for sure because there's like the most common theme, people who say like yeah I was 5 years in consulting and I got tired and wanted to change my life so I came to OuiShare... [...] it's an NGO, with an interest in topics like The future of work, new models of organisations, trying to rethink structures, and experiment. Then I get a weird look and people stop asking questions.	not a lot of people think the way we think about a lot of things
P3		
P4	c'est à dire que pendant longtemps je croyais que Ouishare c'était des mecs qui s'amusent à faire de la licence Open Source à jouer avec des imprimantes 3D // For a long time I thought that OuiShare was a bunch of guys who loved Open Source license and playing around with 3D printers [...] Pour moi la force de Ouishare équipe, qui est antinomique, c'est de savoir, forcer un peu mais sans forcer, sans être agressif, amener aux gens les nouvelles idées, les trucs et mettre les gens en connexion.	
P5	On les voit vers un monde différent avec les technologies et certains portent si la remise en cause du système globalement et notamment du système capitaliste une communauté de gens qui souhaitent un changement de société et qui pour cela discute débattent organisent et agissent pour faire que ce changement soit partagé et que d'autres gens s'y engagent. [...] Moi je trouve que ce qui est intéressant c'est que ce n'est pas seulement de la tolérance c'est aussi de la mise en débat, fait de la conversation et pas seulement la juxtaposition des textes. Finalement il y a un dialogue même si les gens ne sont pas d'accord.	<i>capitalist system</i>
P6		
B1		

B2	<p>international organisation interested in the intersections between technology and social change, and the effects that they generate on different scales [...]</p> <p>After that, you can get into complexities, but in general terms, it's a group of people who is really interested in understanding the world and changing it, and who are willing to not only think about how to change the system but about how they organise themselves for changing the system.</p>	
B3	<p>And we are—at least I try not to be seen as a radical of anything, so I just help to reflect on things. And I don't have a strong position on how to handle some of these debates, I say: just be aware of this, just be aware of that, and look at this, look at that and look at the third option, because the answer is not obvious.</p>	<p><i>crystallised / possibly radical / strongly positioned</i></p>
B4	<p>I think it's a place to share with other people the things that other people couldn't understand. it's like people who like to see their world without common sight, and and we are all incoformistas, we are only searching, we are discovering, we are like kids, we are all the time looking woow, look at this, or We like to play, and that kind of things, that is part you're a psychological way that you are all the time looking at like a child. and here is like we can be children. we have the problems of the children like we are fighting all the time (laughs), and that kind of things, but it is pure.</p>	<p>and that kind of thing is not happening in the companies or is really difficult to find in traditional companies. because there is a structure there is hierarchy, and that kind of things don't lead you to be what you want to be or who you are. you are all the time looking and have to do this because of this like my colleague or my boss...</p>
B5	<p>I would call it... it's my community. it's where when it comes to ideology, more or less, or when it comes to values, I feel at home. so it's a bunch of really nice and interesting people that I love, and I identify myself with it. and it allows me to do projects and to develop myself in a way that it would not be possible in any other way.</p>	<p>I think that's interesting. I mean this distinction between us and them. Because to me and in a way "them" doesn't make any sense in Ouishare context, because I think there is an "us", but anyone could be us, could be part of us. [...] we don't have borders, they are not that clear, who is from Ouishare and who is not from Ouishare. [...] I wouldn't want to distinguish between us and them. Because them is the rest of humanity or... [...] And I think this mentality us vs them is completely far away from the Ouishare principle. [...] we don't do these visions. I think there is us when we work together. There is us because we are a community. (B5)</p>
B6	<p>it reminds me of a bit of my own world the advertising world. in the advertising agencies everyone was like the eternal kids, and no children. Exactly. so I think the type of profile of people in Ouishare, and it's not like just two people in the team but in the general ecosystem, people very very curious about the world, very entrepreneur, very optimistic, and I think willing to change. willing to make an effort to change things, and people who wanted challenge the reality. my friends, some of them may not like their jobs but they don't pretend to change that.</p>	<p>those others worry about the family, the kids, and the small kids, how to pay the bills, and how to enjoy your holidays. for example looking at the work in a very different way. looking at the work or the job as some more traditional way, this is the place where I go and I get money at the end of the month to live and have my freedom in something different.</p>

4.4 Citations for Ouishare five dominants in Self–Other dichotomies

I Trust		
...as general base value; feeling of being trusted, sometimes in contrast to previous experience		
P1	We have a lot of trust in the community. That's one of the things it's built on, trust, and friendship, and [...] liking each other for who you are.	
P3	I'd say the most refreshing part of ouishare people is open-mindedness and that's a big big difference for me from if I compare it to anywhere else I've worked	<i>not open-minded</i>
P4	Mais du coup ça marche bien que.. parce que de la bonne intuition des gens. C'est à dire en gros comme tout va vite, comme toute est rapide, c'est des communications. Il faut faire confiance dans les gens pour qu'ils, dans cette vitesse, suivent les bons filons.	
B1	when I came to Ouishare I discovered I could do things that I didn't know I could do; and also that people trust me. Not because of my background, but because of the potential they see I could have, which is really different from the world we live. So you only need to show interest in this, and they really give you the opportunity.	<i>contrast w/ previous experience</i>
B2	I was in the summit [...] and I was impressed that they opened the exercise on which are the values of OuiShare and how we would reframe it, which ones we should leave and which ones keep. And I was thinking: I arrived recently, and my relation to OuiShare, it's not super close. So for me it was impressive that some people who have been really engaged with this organisation and putting 100% dedication to make it grow, open such a conversation with people like me, kind of. Where I can give an approach, and I would be closer to an organisation that thinks X or Y, but at the same time it's like wow - how open you are to discuss everything. I was impressed.	
B3	And what is not working anymore, is the Global—Ouishare Global, almost nobody posts there. Facebook group. Why? I don't know. [...] Probably because it grew so big that the level of trust among the people might be less, or you don't know the people so you are more afraid of posting, or spamming people on things there.	
B5	very open minded people that are able to have a conversation, seeing the different pros and cons of each thing and of each situation; that we do not radicalise; that we are able to ponder the situations in the context of nature that they are,	

II movement		
mentally & physically (geographically), moving between ideas, locations. opportunism, reactivism		
P1	it's like randomly being in places, just because [...] most people in OuiShare are pretty dynamic, and open to change, used to change [...] and don't really see sort of	<i>static, settled location & nationality</i>

	such traditional categories as where I live or what nationality I'm from	
P2	there are a lot of people who are trying to do this kind of flexibility lifestyle with no norms or more flexible norms... very interesting people.	<i>norms, less flexible</i>
P3	a collection of people and ideas, and I would say some of the main values are doing something which benefits most people [...] I guess you can't really categorise it - I have a hard time, I've not seen a structure like this before [...] It makes me think of solid molecules, you know of all these different atoms and ions that are vibrating in different directions yet somehow make up the same molecule	<i>previous experience: [for example, in a bank] you can have like hierarchy involved and a lot of time to get blocked from doing great things because it's not within your role.</i>
P4	En fait, Ouishare, c'est de l'intuition. C'est de l'intuition. Lancer et communiquer, rapidement. Et après il peut y avoir des erreurs, il y peut avoir des sujets finalement où ce n'est pas si bien, mais c'est pas grave. [...] Cela dit ce rythme de communication, elle est très en rapport avec son temps. Ouishare ça marche parce que c'est ça. Ouishare il marche parce que tous les sujets sur quel on lance, ils vont vite, ils émergent vite, les acteurs - ils n'ont pas le temps, et du coup quelqu'un comme Ouishare qui est capable de leur dire, nous, hop hop, on a tout regardé, on a tout vu et on peut vous dire que tac tac tac tac. Si on était dans des temps plus long et que tout le monde avait le temps de réfléchir tranquillement, Ouishare marcherait pas - ce que les entreprises n'auraient pas besoin.	Au final une fois que tu dises que t'en penses, tout le monde a déjà entendu parler du truc. Au moins il communique. Mais en même temps pour moi c'est la plus grande force et c'est ce qui me met le plus - c'est la plus grande distance que j'ai avec Ouishare. C'est bizarre mais pour moi c'est comme ça. Pas de paradoxe. Et je suis sûr, convaincu du côté fondamental que ça a pour Ouishare, pour la société, ou pour la vie en général, j'en sais rien. Je ne sais pas s'il faut vivre comme ça.. [...] Après moi j'ai un peu un fantasme que tout le monde peut tout comprendre. Mais ça prend du temps. [...] Par exemple, moi, me mettre dans cette mouvance de connexion, de communication permanente, c'est un effort parce que moi je ne suis pas comme ça.
P6	Le problème c'est que avant d'arriver chez Ouishare je me suis dit je n'ai rien à apporter je ne connais rien. Je fus curieux et j'ai envie de faire bouger les choses.	
B2	it may not be a station, like the arrival station, but it's a very interesting hub or collective to go through	
B3	You're here, you're there, this is also quite impressive. [...] you end up being in a lot of places on behalf of Ouishare [...] [people] who travel a lot	
B4	in general it's like searchers - people who are open minded,; discovering trying to discover what's happening and what can I do for that everything could be better,	
B5	we want to change things, we don't want them, we don't want to have them the way they are, and that's what we have in common, is how we want to change it.	
B6	so when I met them (ouishare) I completely fell in love because their pitch was completely different, it was much more positive. it was like yeah we're talking about this collaborative consumption, and of course there's a lot of problems like from the legal aspect but the moment that we hit the wall, we don't waste time on discussion or having arguments, we just take another shortcut, and try to squish in another way. we don't ask permission permission or sorry to anyone. I really loved that, you are my people.	I was also getting around to the people, but it didn't resonate with me at all because to me they sound very very negative. this is f***** s*** we have to break the system, blah blah blah, and especially they were using the language really from the sixties in Spain. or in the 80s after Franco. it's like it doesn't resonate with me, we are in another time. and I know that this is s*** but what do we do about that? and especially the storytelling there was against the big power, like the rich or whatever, and I remember they were talking like that these people live like above [X street] and this is exactly where I live (laughs). that's my neighborhood, and my people as well. really this proletarian type of movement and that doesn't resonate with me.

III unpredictability resilience	
ability to withstand chaos, changing norms, mistakes	
P1	<p>one thing that's really important it's basically being okay with accepting contradiction, and like stark contrastings or completely opposing, and tension. And to me that tension is one of the most productive things that actually drives OuiShare forward</p> <p>[...] trying to make OuiShare work [is] a thing that will never be done [...] I'm good at organising things, which is why OuiShare is good for me, because I can perpetually organise things and it keeps getting disorganised again. But it's also super super tiring. And it never lasts.</p>
P2	<p>a lot of energy and money and resources lost in that chaos, a lot, that's frustrating [...]</p> <p>the whole time management thing, I try to put more discipline in how we organise, how we plan projects, how we communicate; but the fact that that's a mess all the time [...]</p>
P3	<p>And ouishare because you're so much more flexible about that -- it's very rare that somebody says no to you -- and it's actually so extreme sometimes that I think it puts ouishare at risk, because sometimes [...] people are just taking initiative and doing stuff, where sometimes maybe they need a little bit of a framework before they do their project. [...]</p> <p>But it's never defined who is supposed to give me that green light, so sometimes I can be tired of trying to figure out [...] the right person to say yes or no</p>
P5	<p>je trouve que ce qui est intéressant dans cette organisation c'est un peu la subtilité et le fait d'accepter la complexité que le monde n'est pas univoque ce n'est pas dogmatique. Je trouve que c'est assez intéressant parce que c'est assez rare que souvent.</p>
P6	<p>Peut être que quand je suis arrivé il n'y a personne qui est là pour dire voilà comment on fonctionne. Voilà comment ça marche. En fait on découvre tout sur le terrain quand on une qui disait il y avait ce côté volontaire de sa demande d'être proactif il faut qu'on ait envie de motiver et c'est comme ça qu'on va chercher l'information là bas.</p>
B1	<p>So for me it's been a bit of changing the mindset, trying to see the good potential instead of.. We all have defaults and sometimes we make mistakes, but it seems that there are no mistakes in ouishare, there are only learnings, so it's like.. There's also pardon, or I don't know if it's pardon, but okay we know with you, maybe you might be wrong, but you did your best, and okay let's try to fix it together and do better next time. [...]</p> <p>It's okay, because at least you have the perspective of how people feel, if they feel comfortable, and that's enough for me. [...] I don't know how to define this concept, but it's like ... just keep on going and you'll do things. But don't feel disappointed when something is not working, because it's</p>

	normal. [on the other hand, says] I don't like fighting also, I don't like when there's tension, so I cannot stay like avoiding this kind of problem.	
B2	It wants to be a collective group, and share the risks, but at the same time sometimes the pains stay at the individual level [...] the responsibilities, or the pressures or the uncertainties, all these things end up being at an individual level.	the level of informality in terms of processes makes it hard for people to really get into the organisation.
B3	[because of information overload] I spend a lot of time on work coordination, not actually doing work but just working to coordinate work. It's also work, but you don't feel like this is work	obviously you cannot be perfect, while you do things, you make mistakes, it's the only thing, and some people will not tolerate these mistakes or these contradictions that sometimes occur in Ouishare, and they prefer to leave because the feel that this is not fair for them.
B4		when I left that kind of [multinational] companies and saw this [ouishare], wonderful, but I have to understand and to learn this new model, because it's not so easy at all and from the structure to unstructure -- I'm in the middle. I'm not feeling so good with absolute chaos. I need some order. Because when there is no order, I start to think about other things and I'm not producing.
B5	I like the chaordicity, but sometimes when there is more chaos than order, It just makes me crazy.	I feel like turnover is very high, You know people that don't have a lot of energy, have to quit, or they have to get a better job, or they cannot do that many hours voluntarily anymore. so that's also a huge problem

	IV curiosity & experimentation	
	risk levels, wide scope of interests, trendhunting, asking questions rather than providing answers. critical mindset, self-reflexivity	
P1	we have a lot of people who are quite curious, getting interested in new things coming [...] A 'ouishare person', if there's something really cool that pops up, like he'd go for it, you know, right? And not be like no-no-no, I'm not gonna take that risk, tadadaa.. It's more like you're gonna rile the people and you're gonna get everyone excited, and youre gonna, like, start... but obviously there's many examples where that might not be the case, but I would just say that if i'm trying to caricature , that would sort of what I would... and trying to take on sort of impossible stuff,	
P2	Ouishare spirit and vocabulary and ways of thinking. Now we take it for granted, but not a lot of people think the way we think about a lot of things. So in that way already OuiShare sort of opens your mind to new possibilities. [...] Things like, okay, okay sure I don't know how you pull it off, chapeau, but they have this unbreakable faith that whatever they want, they will achieve it, even though they're not really qualifié, they're still gonna sell you a dream, and I don't know how they're gonna deliver something. And that's something I admire. It drives me insane, personally, but I admire [it] a lot.	
P3	what I really love is that when they're you know exploring say technology or Mobility they're trying to explore it and asking the question how do you make it best for everybody you know how do you benefit you know Mom and Pop and my neighbor down the street and my cousin's son and how	

	do they get to friends where they need to go and how do we do it in a way that works for everybody.	
P4	Mais pour le coup il y a un truc intéressant, c'est qu'il y a de la réflexivité. On peut dire que non finalement...on pensait que c'était une bonne initiative, c'était un beau projet et que tout ça, mais finalement vue quand ça devient, un peu des doutes. Et on en est ça c'est quelque chose de très noble, très appréciable au sein d'Ouishare. c'est le recul quand même. Moi j'aime ça. J'aime le recul: tous les gens dans cette groupe réfléchissent, et se posent des questions, ils sont dans le doute. Est ce que c'est bien, est-ce que ça fait bien. Par contre, moi je suis un peu trop que dans cette partie là: la réflexivité.	
P6	je pense que je mets du temps à me mettre dans cet état d'esprit que si je veux faire des choses c'est aussi à moi de les imaginer et de les proposer.	ça fait déjà 10 ans qu'on a l'habitude du système classique. Le système classique c'est qu'il y a des organisations qui ont des business models qui sont une façon de gagner de l'argent quand ils ont besoin de quelqu'un pour les aider dans la façon de s'organiser dans leur business model. Ils font depuis deux postes, on entend parler on regarde ça m'intéresse et je réponds
B1	but when I came to OuiShare I discovered I could do things that I didn't know I could do;	<i>contrasting lack of experimentation previously</i>
B3	I think a lot of people in Ouishare more into the asking questions, so what is the next question that we ask? The next challenge. Also while exploring potential answers. [...] there are no real constraints on exploration of potential answers.	Probably it's people who ask less questions, so the questions are bad for them, and they just try to have the correct answer to the challenge that they have, not like what is my next work, [...] how to do other things, I don't know... The scope of options they consider are usually a bit more limited.
B6	so when I met them (ouishare) I completely fell in love because their pitch was completely different, it was much more positive. it was like yeah we're talking about this collaborative consumption, and of course there's a lot of problems like from the legal aspect but the moment that we hit the wall, we don't waste time on discussion or having arguments, we just take another shortcut, and try to squish in another way. we don't ask permission permission or sorry to anyone. I really loved that, you are my people.	

	V affect	
	emotionality, playfulness, childlikeness (infantility); accepting people with emotions; fusion of work and play in phatic channels. "falling in love" with OS, working with passion	
P1	[In Ouishare] you're doing something that is something you really believe in, that you get a purpose out of, and so you put much more of yourself into it, than you would in a normal job, probably. Which also creates more risk in a way for yourself because you attach your whole self-worth and identity to the whole thing. So the stakes are higher for that not working or stopping it; 'cause it's like giving up yourself a bit;	

P2	<p>I discovered or found out about OS thanks to a friend of a friend who was working with one of the early members in one of their other projects connected to startups and innovation in Paris, and so [s/he] got invited to the OuiShare Fest, and [s/he] went there and [s/he] fell in love and actually wanted to work in OuiShare [...]</p> <p>I just knew that they were cool. But I didn't go into the details. It wasn't until then that I realised all the things that OuiShare actually does. [...]</p> <p>I love seeing how people are very motivated and passionate about the discussions, either values or projects or any governance questions.. People are getting excited together and I love that, those for me are the moments where people really come together as a collective, as a community to decide where we're going. Or at least we try to.</p>	
P4		<p>"Je n'ai toujours pas compris ce que ça voulait dire ""être professionnel"". Pour moi en fait professionnel ça veut dire faire quelque chose pas parce que tu aimes le faire, faire quelque chose parce que c'est devenu. C'est devenu automatique de le faire.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>Pour moi c'est.. de devenir professionnel, c'est mettre de la distance entre ses émotions et ce que tu fais.</p> <p>[...] Ou par exemple, il y a des gens qui sont très pro qui malgré... malgré des problèmes personnels, ils font leur travail très bien. En fait pour moi c'est une espèce de détachement entre ta vie personnelle sentimentale intérieure et ce que tu fais et trucs; et je n'ai jamais réussi à faire la distinction. C'est très enfantin mais... pour moi, je n'ai pas d'envie d'être un professionnel."</p>
B1	<p>maybe I fell in love with ouishare so I don't see so many disadvantages, I need a bit of time to.. (laughs)</p>	
B2	<p>"I went [to the Fest] with 2 friends [...] and we arrived there and we were, like, amazed - it was like the energy, [...] the topics and everything ///</p> <p>there was very positive energy, very young and proactive and reflecting about things in a different way, which really connected, and which was more of a contagious than a rational thinking about why we were there, or what do they do, actually. And I remember we came back super motivated. Super motivated.</p>	
B3	<p>We are not like a traditional consultant who are just there for the job and for the money, [...] we walk the talk on what we say and what we are doing and so on, and we are passionate and all that, and I think very often people are very surprised that we are so passionate about what we are doing, not just doing a job.</p>	
B4	<p>we say that we are really really collaborative but we are not. because we are humans, we are not robots and we are feeling, we have feelings. I think it's better to say that hey yeah I ouishare but I'm human like others, And I feel not so collaborative sometimes and I feel selfish, that kind of things.</p>	
B5	<p>" so it's a bunch of really nice and interesting people that I love, and I identify myself with it."</p>	

B6	so when I met them (ouishare) I completely fell in love because their pitch was completely different, it was much more positive. [...] I was really super super in love, I started to go to the events, drinks talks everything. at some point I just declared my love and I sat down with them: I really like you and do what you do guys, it's really how I like to do things, and it resonates with me.	
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Annex 5. Interview citations: phatic communication

1. **How much do you use social media channels such as Facebook or Telegram? (In general, and in Ouishare)**
 - a. [Facebook - no.] Telegram - not much, only for the Ouishare group. I actually only have it in my computer, so I use it very barely, because I normally don't have it open. So every now and then I open it and I have 600 messages, and then I scroll and click on the articles, no, and I don't use it much. (X1)
 - b. I use everything. at the beginning it was so difficult. the first year was horrible, and now I'm good in the tools. but I think I will need a little more order, at least in the drive I can find nothing. and I think we have a lot of tools. Less is more, I think we need three. We need Slack, drive, Loomio. (X2)
 - c. Facebook not that much [...] in Ouishare, I'm not as active as I should [...] I'd say I'm pretty active on Telegram one-on-one, I tend to interact with a lot of people, usually people from [my community] [...] And [in Telegram] groups, typically, I would say medium to low, I'm not super active like the people who share all the time things, but I do come and I do share stuff once in a while. [...] Telegram is my main one. Facebook groups - I never use them (X3)
 - d. I'm using channels now that I didn't use before, such as tools like Trello or Slack, I didn't use them before, now I'm using them also for example in [company], or other things in life. Telegram I didn't use, I was only using Facebook. [...] (X4)
2. **What kind of things do you usually post and why?**
 - a. I posted stuff not very frequently. When I posted it it was either news, or events that I saw that could be interesting, so that I would share in the group. (X1)
 - b. In Facebook yes. Usually things that I think that could be interesting for all the community, no more than that. or some events or I read a blog and this is like for us. Telegram not too much. just reading (X2)
 - c. I usually share articles [from Ouishare Magazine] I feel more legitimate to comment when I have something to share related to Ouishare. Where I would post articles - in some groups - I would post sometimes, I would react to good news, or something that really concerns me [...] But I don't like spamming people either, so... [...] I don't feel obliged to reply in open groups to something. (X3)
 - d. Most of the things that I post on facebook are basically for Ouishare group. Because I don't use it a lot personally. I'm not like this person who is posting everything they're doing; when there's something relevant, I'm posting mostly in the Ouishare groups [...] In telegram I don't post a lot, neither on whatsapp, because I'm not like this type of person, like when we do a social event, there's like [person X] for example is really good on reporting what's happening; I'm really bad, when I'm somewhere, I don't remember to take pictures and things, which is really bad for documentation. But there's people who are good on this, so this is not my thing. (X4)
 - e. I've been really devoted to sharing information, and I like - it's not a problem for me, when I see something, clack-clack - and I share fast. And I have a obviously what I find relevant might be one thing every day, or three things a week, so I try to be also selective, but people seem to appreciate sharing the information. (X5)
3. **Do you ever react to others' posts and at what kind of things do you react at?**
 - a. Oh, [I react] a lot. I'm a very emoji - gif sort of person. Not with everyone of course, but with the ones I talk the most to, Because we're close right, we don't do harm, we get our inside jokes. In global ones sometimes, when it feels appropriate, like the reaction. But yeah, I do write a lot of emoticons, and I think they convey more emotion. (X3)
 - b. Sometimes. but not much because if we everyone make "like" it's 200 ["likes"] in telegram. in Facebook because it's not so intrusive. in telegram I try to say intelligent things in the right moment and nothing else. [...] And I think sometimes if I have a doubt about something, about someone and that can hurt that person in a vulnerable way I prefer to ask them privately. if I think that the question I'm going to ask is going to help everyone I ask [in telegram]; if not, no. If I'm going to ask about something that I know that a lot of people want to know I do it in a public way, so that everyone could know about that. (X2)
 - c. If I react? In Telegram I'm very shy, I never say anything. I don't know many people. [...] But not for any reason; it's that I don't feel comfortable. I think like it's a group of people who

- look at you when you do this. Actually no-one looks who has liked the comment, but when you do it... it is. But it's not related to... Just that the value for me is reading it, so I read it. (X1)
- d. in telegram I react to pictures, because even if I don't take them, I like to see people connecting, or.. And in facebook mostly for example when someone is looking for help [...] Basically not many reactions, sometimes on a written article that I like, I put a smiley face (laughs) (X4)
 - e. A diversity of things. I would say both at interesting articles, because I'm an information junkie, I like to read a lot of things and so on - not academic, very often, fun facts. Funny articles and so on. And if I like them, I share or reply or whatever. And then also on the social part of people posting pictures of what they are, who they are meeting, where they are travelling, this kind of things, to keep the human touch on all these things. That would be my two things (X5)
4. **How do the reactions make you feel? (e.g. when someone reacts to your post)**
- a. How do I feel when other people react to my posts? I think it's valuable. I know that I'm selfish when I don't add any comments to the content that other people has provided. But when you add a comment, you add value on top of... so they give you value... I would normally keep to myself, I think other people in [local] group do that, I think it's good, like this reference, I think it's super good thing because it helps to open a conversation. [...] Nonverbal, I don't know... at least they have a clear effect, which is that if it's the first time I put a link in the facebook group, and no-one likes it, unlikely that I put a second one (laughs) (X1)
 - b. Me? I'm never looking at that [at the reactions]. Of course if I see that a post... like once I posted something about [a topic] and Rachel Botsman retweeted me, of course I was happy. but I don't want someone to clap me or give me "like" because I know they are so easy, nobody reads nothing. [...] of course if it comes from somebody who's really important to me... it's nice for 10 seconds. but the life is going on. (X2)
 - c. It's Ouishare, so I expect everyone to help and get on board, new stuff. But no, again I don't feel personal - I don't value my contribution by the number of likes or reaction. Maybe because I understand so much how they work - likes, and feeds (?) - I don't feel compelled, I know it's very superficial and fake, [but it's not the quality] Because you can write an amazing article, and have 3 likes, or have a panda video, and 65. So no, it's not quality! (laughs) (X3)
 - d. Sometimes it's true, specially in telegram, information is really disorganized, so sometimes someone posts something important, nobody replies, there are like many other things happening, and it's like - it's not feeling bad but I feel like maybe okay, maybe this person posted like expecting someone to say something, and nobody's replying, so... actually I think of it, but not always react. If I have something to say, I react, otherwise I just feel bad. (X4)
 - e. (Silence) No, it's a test. Depends on the time of the day or the night that you post (laughs), then you have different volume of reactions. [...] obviously it's a matter of being heard at some extent, or people care about that - for me it's more a test of the level of interest, interest on the topic [...] But it's more on that respect that it's important because it shows you a level of interest or potential filter or self-censorship on sharing too many things that people will not care about in this group. But again if they don't [react], I don't feel attacked or I don't care. It's interesting for me; if people don't care, I don't share again the same kind of topic, or not as often. (X5)
5. **When you see previous reactions to the post, does this affect your own reaction, and how?**
- a. In case my opinion was already shared, someone reacted, then I won't react, it's already there, I don't need to add or express what someone already said. (X3)
 - b. Exactly, if there's an article on telegram, and three people put smiley faces saying, so maybe I say like this is something I should read because people are reading it, so... yeah, I think definitely it affects. (X4)
 - c. when there is a lot of reactions of sharing or whatever, before you make your own comment or like, especially if you want to comment, you try not to repeat or build on previous conversations (X5)
6. **Other topics**
- a. **Messages are lost in the flow**
 - i. that's a thing I don't like about that, about the instant messages like conversations get lost very easily. But I know, it's the nature of it. (X3)
 - b. **Information overload**

- i. Sometimes I feel a bit overwhelmed by all the information that's flowing in channels, so yeah sometimes I struggle just to be able to react to everything that's happening. (X4)
 - ii. the problem I think is that it mixes.. funny stuff with articles, with jokes, with serious news about projects and things [...] so much information going down that sometimes I'm tired to even try to write when I could be a good spectator (X3)
 - c. **Intensity**
 - i. I use everything but I don't want to be in everything. because you have Ouishare, then you have your family you have your friends, and other colleagues, it's too much. (X2)
 - ii. for me it's really an easy way to stay in contact. Also facebook groups for me is not really intrusive, while for example telegram is a bit more intrusive, having it on your phone is like: a 150 messages!! (laughs) [...] (X4)
 - iii. And there's people who love being connected all the time, they're super active, I don't know, 60 messages they have and they love it, but I get drained and I have to turn off my notifications, it becomes too much.(X3)
 - d. **Importance of timing**
 - i. I think that some people are better at naturally getting those moments, when it's the best moment to share something (X3)
 - ii. sometimes someone posts something important, nobody replies, there are like many other things happening, and it's like - it's not feeling bad but I feel like maybe okay, maybe this person posted like expecting someone to say something, and nobody's replying, so... (X4)
 - iii. Depends on the time of the day or the night that you post (laughs), then you have different volume of reactions. [...] (X5)
 - e. **active/passive member image**
 - i. naturally, as many things in Ouishare, this is then creating division between an active and passive member. Not because of activity because we all do stuff, but active in the public eye, active in talking, sharing, you know, taking more... communication channels, ??? this sort of phenomena. (X3)
 - f. **Keeping up with information**
 - i. maybe once a week or every two weeks I go on purpose to see things that are happening, and I try to react on these things, like just comment or say if I like it or if I don't know, it's something that I really try to do because I want to be aware of what's happening. (X4)
- 7. **The meaning of emoji**
 - a. **All emoji have the same meaning**
 - i. For me for example now that facebook has many different faces, for me it's all the same - okay i've seen it, and I write something - because you cannot express it this way (X4)
 - b. **"Like" as social support**
 - i. And reacting - positively react to things you like or appreciate - for me that's a way of supporting this activity or this person, and again not all the time, because [there is] a hundred people in the group, so don't need to spam everybody, but yeah I think I'm one of the active persons in the channel. (X5)
- 8. **Judgements on one's social media use in Ouishare**
 - a. in Ouishare, I'm not as active as I should (X3)
 - b. I don't like spamming people either (X3)
 - c. I know that I'm selfish when I don't add any comments to the content that other people has provided. (X1)
- 9. **Sense of legitimacy**
 - a. I feel more legitimate to comment when I have something to share related to Ouishare. (X3)
 - b. I think in general [--] you judge in advance if you think your comment or post is [going to be] successful or not. [...]You feel very vulnerable. People.. It's not like they're mean or anything. If they ignore, or are drawn by something else, so it's like you're a voice and no-one can hear you, when someone with a louder voice comes in. [...] I guess our ways of communicating [and] with all the dynamics, we inforce that people either by personality or position, who feel more comfortable to share in the open, gain that legitimacy in the eyes of everyone else. [...]

people who are not that comfortable for any number of reasons... you're not heard anyway, or I would say you're more easily ignored, in a way.(X3)

- c. for me one of the problems on this channel [...] people who are not so comfortable sharing; people who are doing a lot of amazing stuff and are not visible, it's a pity because we have a lot of amazing talent in the community that is not perceived and basically it's not visible, it's there but we didn't know. I have no solution for that, it's a problem. (X5)

10. Self-censorship in group conversation

- a. I push to interact on a more personal level. In a way, you feel more free to be yourself. And also because if you're texting someone and privately it means you have a more direct connection to a person, so it's easier to address than when you think the whole group... ?? I think you're more cautious. (X3)
- b. I got feedback once from X, [they] said that I don't share enough, so people don't know what I do, and that people would never value what I'm bringing to the community because it's always [not visible] But personally I don't feel quite comfortable with it, oversharing everything I do, just for the sake of showing that I'm doing something. (X3)
- c. I don't feel so comfortable within this group because I don't know them (X4)

I, Auli Viidalepp,

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