The rocky road to sustainability implementation
exploring everyday tensions in organizational silos, hypocrisy, and stigma

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The rocky road to sustainability implementation:

Exploring everyday tensions in organizational silos, hypocrisy, and stigma.

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Abstract

This thesis explores everyday organizational dynamics to gain insights into sustainability implementation tensions and their persistence. Sustainability is one of the most pressing contemporary challenges and a complex task that many organizations still fail, even when they are willing and able to implement it. Despite a growing number of studies, tools and approaches to help organizations understand and implement sustainability, there is a paucity of contextualized research on the complications that can arise.

Adopting a problem-driven perspective, this study explores a particular organization and its sustainability journey. Globalcar (a pseudonym), the Latin American subsidiary of a multinational car manufacturer, has been intensifying its sustainability initiatives since 2015 in the wake of the diesel scandal that put pressure on the automotive sector. Albeit a technology leader in car production, Globalcar struggles to overcome the tensions associated with sustainability.

The study's methodological approach is informed by an ethnography consisting of 480 hours of observations, 73 interviews, and company documents. Throughout the empirical chapters, I analyze three cases that emerged from Globalcar's daily activities, focusing on different angles that contribute to sustainability implementation studies and specific streams of theory.

The first case investigates how sustainability implementation at Globalcar is impacted by silos, a metaphor used by organizational members to describe the distance between departments. My analysis suggests that silos lead to what I label "silofication", a self-reinforcing, ongoing and acute lack of collaboration and knowledge exchange between working teams. Silofication emphasizes organizations as polities, meaning an agglomerate of groups with different interests

and goals. In this highly political environment, solutions to dissolve boundaries between departments are concomitant to defensive responses from managers, which gradually undermine attempts to integrate sustainability into core management functions. The study contributes to sustainability implementation studies by showing that collaboration challenges in such implementations are as central as managerial support and consensus. It also contributes to organizational boundary studies by identifying micro-strategies that different teams and managers adopt to influence the shaping of boundaries between sustainability and other organizational functions.

The second case brings employees' perspectives of hypocrisy from unresolved tensions in a specific project. The biannual graduate scheme is part of the social pillar of Globalcar's sustainability strategy and aims at developing the organization's future leaders. My analysis reveals how hypocrisy can be maintained over time, even when exposed and challenged by the trainees participating in this initiative. A compelling online selection process fosters the fantasy of rapid career progression in a modern and agile organization; however, promises are unmet and symptoms expose hypocrisy, while trainees' complaints are used against them to reconstruct hypocrisy and maintain the project running. Scholars typically portray organizational hypocrisy as predominantly rational and ephemeral. This article questions these assumptions by drawing on the psychoanalytical concepts of fantasy and symptoms, as well as Sloterdijk's concept of cynical reason, to suggest that hypocrisy can be a pervasive intersubjective process tied to contextual fantasies that are (re)created over time. Thus, this article contributes to corporate hypocrisy studies and to organization studies adopting psychoanalytical concepts, identifying cynical reason as a mechanism that allows fantasies to be replaced.

The third case further develops the growing importance of online interactions to understand the persistence and emergence of tensions in sustainability. Globalcar is growingly interested in diversity as part of its sustainability strategy, but its actions are still embryonic and do not consider implications that the Internet might cause to specific employees. Here, I focus on the highly stigmatized gay men employees. I investigate the impacts of social network sites on the identity work that such employees perform at work, capturing the possible tensions emerging from the interplay between online and face-to-face interactions. The analysis reveals a dominant behavior I label "correspondent behavior": attempts to match face-to-face and online identity work on a continuum from integration to segmentation of work and stigmatized identities. This behavior occurs in a cycle, as it rarely brings the expected outcomes for employees and reinforces new tensions provoked by the Internet. Stigma studies assume that social media has not changed the way employees manage their stigmas, whereas this study argues otherwise. I thus contribute to the scholarship on stigma management and identity work by investigating identity responses, tensions and ambiguous outcomes that these new online interactions create.

Overall, this thesis contributes to the theory and practice of sustainability implementation. The investigation of ordinary daily tasks sheds light on extraordinary patterns of behaviors. These are often taken for granted by organizational members and explain the persistence of tensions in sustainability implementation. Each case's intricacies substantiate that embracing tensions might not necessarily lead to improvements in sustainability practices. Rather, understanding the behavioral nuances and mechanisms in each of these complex projects might be more useful. Therefore, the thesis demonstrates that resolving tensions involves not only relevant projects with high-level executive support but also knowledge about the organization's everyday life.

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Preface

Adopting an ethnographic and problem-driven approach, this thesis investigates the everyday sustainability implementation process at Globalcar (fictional name), the Latin American subsidiary of a multinational car manufacturer. It contains three core papers that were either presented at conferences and in study groups or are currently undergoing the revise and resubmit process of academic journals.

- The first paper, titled **"Organizational silos as a barrier to sustainability implementation"**, looks at the relationship between sustainability implementation and organizational silos at Globalcar. It was presented at the Organization Theory PhD Research Day 2021 (co-organized by Bayes Business School, UCL School of Management, Cambridge Judge Business School, King's College London, Oxford Said Business School, London Business School, London School of Economics and Imperial College Business School). The article was part of the Social Issues in Management Division program at the 2020 Academy of Management Annual Meeting (Lauriano, Reinecke, & Etter, 2020). It was also approved for presentation at the Advancing Management Research in Latin America conference, organized by the Academy of Management (Lauriano, 2020). Previously, the paper was discussed on several occasions: the Academy of Management writing workshop in Edinburgh (2020); the King's Business School seminar series of the Strategy, International Management and Entrepreneurship research group (2020); the King's Business School PhD symposium (2020, and the (formerly Cass) Business School ETHOS group (2019). The paper is co-authored by Professors Juliane Reinecke and Michael Etter, both from King's Business School.

- The second paper, titled **"It's a reality check! The (re)construction of organizational hypocrisy via cynical fantasies",** addresses the reconstruction of hypocrisy in Globalcar's biannual graduate scheme. It is currently in the third round of revise and resubmit for publication in *Organization Studies*. It was presented at the 2020 EGOS Colloquium, under the sub-theme 5: Organization as Communication: Unpacking the Critical, Transformative, and Emancipatory Role of Communication. An earlier version of this article was included at the conference "Promises on sustainability and their consequences" (Lauriano & Salazar-Morales, 2019). The paper is co-authored by Diego A. Salazar-Morales, a PhD candidate at King's Business School.

- The third paper, titled **"The Correspondent Behavior Cycle: Managing Stigma When the Online and Offline Worlds Collide at Work"**, examines the interplay between online and face-to-face strategies adopted by Globalcar's stigmatized employees. It is currently in the second round of revise and resubmit to the *Academy of Management Journal.* It was presented at the 2019 EGOS Colloquium, under the sub-theme 15: 'Faking It': Identity Work in an Age of Exclusion (Lauriano & Coacci, 2019), and in King's Business School seminar series of the Strategy, International Management and Entrepreneurship research group (2020). It is co-authored by Dr Thiago Pereira Coacci of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (Brazil).

Throughout the process of crafting these three papers, I received constructive suggestions from audiences that interpreted my ideas in distinct ways. Much of the feedback was incorporated into each of the cases, taking them in diverse directions. Nevertheless, the papers are interconnected at least in two aspects. First, all the situations I explore pertain to the same company: Globalcar. They all reflect everyday sustainability implementation tensions that I observed, even though the portions of data used in each case vary. Second, all three papers consider projects that are part of the broader sustainability strategy of this company. In a sense, Globalcar has a rather eccentric approach to sustainability. Senior management decided to structure a sustainability department under the vice-presidency of human resources, as many of the projects they developed concerned social aspects. This decision, however, led to various challenges and tensions at Globalcar. I make these connections in the introduction to set the backdrop for an exploration of each of the cases and for a discussion of the salient contributions of my thesis to the literature on sustainability implementation.

1. Introduction
The tensions of sustainability at Globalcar

> *Let's be clear about this: our company was dishonest with the EPA, the California Air Resources Board, and with all of you. In my German words: we've totally screwed up! […] we must fix those cars […] and prevent this from ever happening again. We have to make this right. – Michael Horn (Volkswagen US CEO. BBC, 2015).*

This speech refers to what is known as the VW Dieselgate scandal, one of the most emblematic cases of corporate misconduct of our time (cf. Gardiner, 2019). In 2015, pressured by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Volkswagen confessed to the use of defeat mechanisms in their cars. They were created to reduce emissions during tests up to 40 times when compared to their actual performance on the road (EPA, 2020). Volkswagen was not alone. It was soon discovered that other automakers were adopting the same mechanism. The automotive industry was left considerably shaken. As Horn's speech suggests, the case brought sustainability to the core of other automakers' activities—to the point that CEOs officially announced that they would take measures to ensure that such practices would never happen again. Sustainability had become a leadership priority across global car manufacturers.

In this context, Globalcar, the Latin American subsidiary of a multinational car producer, was also pressured to improve its sustainability initiatives. With executive-level support, the company structured a sustainability department to align all sustainability-related activities that the company had already engaged in and to stimulate the creation of new ones. However, sustainability implementation proved to be much harder than initially expected, and multiple tensions emerged when the sustainability team attempted to integrate its activities with other departments of the organization.

When viewed from a paradox perspective, tension is a relationship between two poles of a paradox that are reasonable when taken in isolation, but appear contradictory when put together (Hahn, Pinkse, Preuss, & Figge, 2015; Wannags & Gold, 2020). The concomitant consideration of economic, environmental, and social aspects is expected in corporate sustainability. At the same time, this situation generates several tensions, and organizations often "muddle through", or even stage the implementation of environmental and social initiatives (Crilly, Zollo, & Hansen, 2012). Globalcar exemplifies some surprising elements that could expand our understanding of the theory and practice of sustainability.

First, it is astounding that a company with so many complex processes and products, culminating in highly technological automobile production, still struggles to operationalize sustainability. The car production process involves the assembling of thousands of parts from different suppliers. It also demands coordination between groups with varied expertise, such as design, engineering, logistics, negotiation, and marketing. Within such an already intricate context, Globalcar's difficulties in its sustainability activities are startling.

Second, with considerable leadership support, the organization has invested significantly in sustainability, yet the outcomes are not leading to an integration of such activities with the rest of the organization. Senior management has developed several social and environmental projects and targets, albeit the sustainability team still faces difficulties in daily interactions with other departments that do not correspond to the organization's efforts in such initiatives.

Finally, Globalcar's leaders acknowledge tensions in sustainability; however, contrary to the expectations noted in most sustainability studies (e.g. Hengst, Jarzabkowski, Hoegl, & Muethel, 2019; Jarzabkowski, Lê, & Van de Ven, 2013), embracing problems does not necessarily translate into constructive responses. Managers understand that there are some situations in their daily activities that undermine the potential of sustainability. This resulted in specific actions to promote organizational changes and facilitate sustainability implementation. However, even with the recognition of problems and possible solutions, many of the tensions that managers identified are persistent.

Taken together, these elements pose a "mystery" (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007) that I unravel in this thesis by investigating the dynamics of daily activities at Globalcar. A close focus on organizational reality might shed light on routinized social behaviors (Giddens, 2005) that hinder sustainability implementation and explain why problems persist despite the organization's willingness and ability to change. Managers and employees at Globalcar might be so immersed in their daily tasks that they (re)produce practices that undermine sustainability efforts. In other words, everyday observations of ordinary problems may uncover extraordinary explanations for sustainability implementation tensions (Ybema, Yanow, Wels, & Kamsteeg, 2009). Thus, with a problem-driven approach (Reinecke, Arnold, & Palazzo, 2016), I focus on three cases that illustrate several tensions that sustainability engenders (Hahn, Figge, Pinkse, & Preuss, 2018; Hahn et al., 2015). Each of the cases also contributes to specific streams of literature.

In the first paper, I analyze the tensions caused by the implementation of sustainability in an organization divided by silos between departments. Accustomed to little or no communication between teams, managers now face the challenge of integrating sustainability initiatives and, consequently, "break down departmental walls". Even with several silo-busting initiatives to incentivize cross-departmental collaboration, such attempts to chip away at boundaries are undermined by defensive behaviors that maintain boundaries as they are and thwart sustainability initiatives.

Relying on the organizational boundary literature (Langley et al., 2019) as a framework, I explain how a process of negotiating boundaries emerges from recognizing the adverse aspects of the silos, posing considerable difficulties to sustainability implementation. However, instead of solving the problem, this movement kept the silos intact, further sidelining sustainability initiatives in the organization. By unfolding the relationship between silos and sustainability, this case adds new dimensions to sustainability implementation studies (Carlos & Lewis, 2018; Figge, Hahn, Schaltegger & Wagner, 2002; Hengst et al., 2020). It brings back the traditional management challenge of integration (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), showing that daily coordination challenges are as central to sustainability implementation as managerial consensus (Crilly et al., 2012) and legitimacy building (Hengst et al., 2020). Moreover, this case contributes to organizational boundary studies (Langley et al., 2019; Strauss, Schatzman, Ehrlich, Bucher, & Sabshin, 1994) by identifying micro-strategies that different teams and managers adopt to influence the shaping of boundaries between departments.

The second article presents everyday tensions in Globalcar's biannual graduate scheme. As part of the social pillar of the organization's sustainability strategy, the project has been running for over ten years. It aims to hire young, ambitious graduates who show the potential for rapid career development and stability. However, once hired, trainees face an old, bureaucratic organization that is starkly different from the modern operation they had been led to expect. In fact, many of them view this inconsistency between promises and reality as a form of hypocrisy.

Using the psychoanalytical concepts of fantasy and symptoms (Lacan, 2006a, 2006b), as well as Sloterdijk's concept of cynical reason (Sloterdijk, 1984), I reveal how hypocrisy can be (re)constructed, when individuals create cynical fantasies, maintaining the distance between promises and reality, even after the hypocrisy is exposed and challenged. This article contributes to corporate hypocrisy studies (Wagner, Korschun, & Troebs, 2019; Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz, 2009), by responding to recent calls for a more dynamic understanding of the phenomenon. It also adds to organization studies by adopting psychoanalytical concepts

(Arnaud & Vidaillet, 2018; Vanheule, 2016), identifying a cynical reason as a mechanism that allows fantasies to be replaced.

In the third paper, I delve into diversity implementation tensions, as Globalcar claims to be increasingly interested in the topic as part of its sustainability strategy. Despite its recent actions to increase the number of women in managerial positions, the organization does not currently support LGBTQIA+ employees, a highly marginalized group. Meanwhile, there is a growing demand for employees to use personal social media profiles for work-related purposes. Understandably, this demand poses new dilemmas for LGBTQIA+ employees, now also vulnerable to marginalization in the online world. By moving beyond the organization's physical boundaries, this case underscores the complexities involved in specific sustainability issues.

In addressing this delicate situation, I highlight the collision between face-to-face and online behavior that becomes more relevant each day, particularly in a COVID-19 world. Few extant studies on stigma have captured the interplay between online and face-to-face interactions. My analysis offers a novel perspective, revealing that stigmatized employees perform appraisals and adopt what I label "correspondent behavior", i.e., attempts to match face-to-face and online identity work on a continuum from integration to segmentation of work and stigmatized identities. This happens in a cycle, as stigmatized employees continuously review their behavior. In addition, my research adds new facets to the scholarship on stigma management and identity work (Clair, Beatty, & Maclean, 2005; Duguay, 2016; Follmer, Sabat, & Siuta, 2020) by investigating identity responses and the tensions and ambiguous outcomes inherent in the pervasiveness of social network sites.

Globalcar, therefore, presents a robust scenario in which to appreciate how tensions can play out in sustainability implementation. Given the exploratory nature of these cases, I adopted qualitative methods in this thesis. Taking an ethnographic approach, I drew on 480 hours of daily observations (van Maanen, 1990; Yanow, Ybema, & van Hulst, 2012), conducted over four months in 2018, as well as 73 interviews with various employees (Langley & Meziani, 2020). Additionally, my data gathering included thousands of news articles along with publications and presentations from the organization. For each of the cases, I used different portions of data.

I chose Globalcar as my research object for several reasons. First, I have a personal tie to the automotive sector, as I worked in it for many years. As an employee, I had always been puzzled by the lack of organization in my daily workplace activities. My work routine was characterized by randomly created indicators and targets, projects with huge budgets and no apparent results, and decisions that I perceived as fundamentally irrational and absurd. I had the impression that I was secretly participating in an episode of the American TV series “The Office”. Therefore, for many years, I had an interest in developing more thorough explanations for what I considered a nonsensical scenario. Studying Globalcar seemed like a unique and fitting opportunity.

Second, and already partially mentioned, the sector was pressured by the VW Dieselgate scandal in 2015, which established sustainability as a priority for automakers worldwide. Analyzing how Globalcar implements sustainability and deals with its attendant challenges represents a response to growing societal demands. The corporation is mammoth and has a tremendous impact on the environment and society. This is especially true in the regional context of Latin America, known for its weak institutions and governments (Hxagon, 2019; Salazar-Morales & Lauriano, 2020). In this context, even more responsibility is left in the hands of the private sector than on the government.

Finally, it is still difficult for academics to navigate the intricacies involved in tensions that sustainability brings to organizations (Hahn et al., 2018, 2015), as well as possible solutions to integrate such initiatives effectively into core managerial practices (Hengst et al., 2020; Schneider, Wallenburg, & Fabel, 2014). Investigating the specific and contextualized problems at Globalcar may enhance our knowledge of sustainability tensions and implementation, in general, and particular streams of theory related to these projects.

In the remainder of this chapter, I first explain the importance of understanding sustainability implementation problems. Then, I describe how Globacar has been structuring its sustainability activities, later emphasizing the broad theoretical framework that I adopt in my analysis. To conclude, I give an overview of the thesis.

1.1 The importance of understanding sustainability implementation problems

In the last decade, the world has seen the intensification of long-term problems, such as inequality, energy depletion, and environmental destruction (Antràs, de Gortari, & Itskhoki, 2017; Wright & Nyberg, 2017). Responding to the need to move towards more sustainable practices, various frameworks have been created to set an agenda for action. This effort is particularly salient at the international level. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is perhaps the most widely known example, defining 17 ambitious goals to be reached by 2030 (UN, 2020). To tackle climate change, for instance, the Paris Agreement was signed in 2015 by leaders of 196 countries to formalize their commitment to the formulation of "long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies" (UNFCCC, 2020). At the national level, governments are also developing policies to address specific pressing issues, as exemplified by the Modern Slavery Act in the UK (United Kingdom, 2015), or the recent declaration of a climate emergency from New Zealand's prime minister Jacinda Ardern (Taylor, 2020).

Strikingly, despite the growing number of sustainability actions, the world seems to continue in the opposite direction, especially in the Global South, including Latin America.

The region is marginalized in the capitalist system. With its growing economic and political instability, this region faces additional challenges when it comes to implementing many of the sustainability practices and frameworks created and adopted by western countries (Hxagon, 2019; OIT, 2020). Some recent examples are the massive protests to change the Chilean constitution (Taub, 2019); rising anti-government protests in Colombia (BBC, 2020a); obscure political processes in Peru (BBC, 2020b) and Bolivia (BBC, 2019a); an alleged left-wing dictatorship in Venezuela (BBC, 2019b), and almost daily political crises caused by the Brazilian president (Gielow, 2020). In this turbulent sociopolitical environment, sustainability initiatives from organizations are important, yet more complicated than ever. The successful implementation of progressive social and environmental practices requires ongoing state support, and this crucial support is sorely lacking in Latin America.

Reflecting these regional disparities, capital concentration has never been higher, with 26 people accumulating more money than 50% of the world population (Oxfam, 2018). This scenario is even more disturbing if we consider contextual variables such as race, gender, social class, and stigmatized groups (e.g. LGBTQIA+). With a few exceptions, most of the world's 26 wealthiest individuals are white males from western countries, primarily heads of prominent corporations, such as Amazon, Microsoft, and Facebook (Forbes, 2020).

Organizations, then, occupy a central role in these growing and persistent issues, not only because their leaders have accumulated astronomical amounts of capital, but also because they may perpetuate stigmatization and exclusion. Several examples validate this assertion—from discriminatory hiring procedures and exclusive talent management practices (O'Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2019) to labor rights violations in international supply chains (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015). Recurrently, organizations have been reproducing and reinforcing systemic disparities (Amis, Mair, & Munir, 2020; Amis, Munir, Lawrence, Hirsch, & McGahan, 2018), contrary to the growing number of sustainability reports, public commitments and international frameworks.

In sum, the automotive industry context and the sociopolitical complexities of Latin America offer fertile ground for timely and important research. Thus, as a Latin American automotive manufacturer, Globalcar, was a logical choice for my data collection. Although the company has been trying to implement sustainability, it still faces considerable challenges. A contextualized local study about daily challenges that are reflected at both the national and global levels may provide novel insights into sustainability implementation.

1.2 Globalcar and sustainability

Globalcar, the Latin American subsidiary of a multinational automobile manufacturer, is highly technological. It produces cars: large, complex products that involve a number of processes and parts. Globalcar's local and national influence is undeniable, as it has an impact on a vast spectrum of stakeholders. The company employs thousands of Latin America workers, most of whom spend a substantial portion of their lives working for the organization. It is common for whole families to be employed in different departments of the main factory of the subsidiary. Over the years, several specialized suppliers were created, sometimes with the sole purpose of providing Globalcar with specific tools, materials, and parts. Its dealership network is massive, with hundreds of selling points in the region. This extensive operation poses logistic challenges and the need for local adaptations of sales strategies, which the company has managed without major obstacles.

Globalcar was one of the first companies from its sector to establish activity in the country several decades ago. It reinvented itself multiple times. It endured and thrived during a military dictatorship and saw democracy re-emerge. It survived relatively well during the 2015 global crisis within the automobile industry. Over this trajectory, Globalcar built a strong reputation for its high-quality cars and stability in a typical Latin American country, i.e., a country marked by inequality and volatility.

However, even in this consolidated and seemingly modern organization, I was surprised to learn from its sustainability team that implementing sustainability initiatives is still a struggle. Apparently, many of the projects that the organization developed were downgraded. Following the worldwide car industry's Dieselgate scandal, sustainability became one of the main pillars of Globalcar's corporate strategy and was referred to continuously in the CEO's and vice-president's speeches. In 2015, a sustainability team was created, reporting directly to the Vice-President of Human Resources (HR), one of the most influential executives within the organization. Even though the company does not provide a concrete definition of what they understand as sustainability, they do divide their activities according to environmental, economic and social aspects, following the triple bottom line approach (cf. Elkington, 1998; Henriques & Richardson, 2013).

While the decision to establish the sustainability department under the HR vice-presidency is one possibility that a few studies on HR management (HRM) have explored (DuBois & Dubois, 2012; Sarvaiya, Arrowsmith, & Eweje, 2019), it is not a widespread practice. For Globalcar, it makes sense, in my evaluation. Its first initiative was to organize the various sustainability projects that different parts of the company had developed over the years. The HR department had the required capillarity: an environment that would allow them to interact with most departments in the organization. The vice-president's office also conducts several projects that could have synergy with the sustainability department, such as the biannual graduate scheme and training to help managers heighten their environmental awareness. Furthermore, the HR vice-president is also chair of the Globalcar Foundation board, an important branch of social and environmental projects created decades ago.

To assist the department in planning and structuring sustainability activities, the VP and the sustainability team decided to create a stakeholder matrix and an annual sustainability report, following the Global Reporting Initiative guidelines (GRI, 2015). They soon mapped out various activities that individual departments of the organization had already begun. For instance, the engineering department had actions to lower CO2 emissions from their cars. Similarly, the production departments had developed several initiatives to monitor and improve their environmental impact (e.g. energy, waste, scrap materials, recycling). On the social side, besides the foundation's projects pertaining to education and inclusion, other branches of the HR department took actions towards talent management, leadership formation, training on ethics, and other aspects that could be connected to a broader interpretation of sustainability. Given such initiatives, the possibilities for the future of this department were encouraging.

However, even with all the resources invested in structuring and organizing a sustainability department, the ambition to steer all sustainability activities soon came up against unanticipated stumbling blocks. Once the team attempted to secure cross-departmental collaboration and cooperation, they felt strong resistance from managers who were used to the competitive and political environment of Globalcar. As a consequence, the sustainability team could not achieve its goals. In fact, the members became marginalized in the company. This is the first case I investigated in this thesis. It is followed by two other sustainability initiatives that led to unexpected outcomes: the biannual graduate scheme, in which trainees have strong perceptions of hypocrisy towards Globalcar's leaders; and the daily struggles that LGBTQIA+ employees face, especially with the growing demands for work-related online interactions. These three cases highlight the problems of poorly implemented projects in terms of both the theory and practice of sustainability.

1.3 Theoretical framework

Sustainability is an emerging social topic. As such, a problem-driven (Reinecke et al., 2016) and inductive (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) approach is appropriate. In other words, I entered Globalcar not to test theories but to understand how the sustainability team made sense of their daily activities, looking for complexities in what they perceived as natural or given situations (Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009).

There has been growing interdisciplinary research focused on the implementation of sustainability. Here, as a starting point, I use organization studies that reveal tensions in sustainability initiatives (Hahn et al., 2018, 2015; Pinkse, Hahn, & Figge, 2019). My rationale is that such studies provide a big picture of sustainability that will allow me to dive deeply into specific theoretical streams for each of the cases as I explore the everyday activities of the organization. In this way, my work's theoretical contributions can be amplified, providing connections with multiple ongoing conversations.

Sustainability is still an opaque institutional field (Wijen, 2014), in that it is difficult to understand precisely what it means and the different aspects that should be considered when implementing it. As a result, studies have indicated that organizations either "muddle through", or even "fake" or stage implementations (Crilly et al., 2012), as evidenced by cases of decoupling between policies, practices and outcomes (Bromley & Powell, 2012), perceptions of hypocrisy from stakeholders (Wagner et al., 2019, 2009), or even greenwashing (Kim & Lyon, 2015).

Indeed, the literature points to many tensions that help us understand the complexities that sustainability can bring to organizations when they try to reconcile the social and environmental aspects of sustainability with the already known financial bottom line (Hahn et al., 2015; Van der Byl & Slawinski, 2015a). Problems start to emerge with the realization of tensions between goals. Organizations have a variety of working teams and projects happening simultaneously, generating an abundance of knowledge that is difficult to be shared within and with other departments in a company (Lessard & Zaheer, 1996). Additionally, personal and organizational sustainability agendas might be at variance with each other, as managers have their specific targets, ambitions, and wills that might contradict the organization's overall sustainability goals (Lewis & Clark, 2020).

This conflict is highlighted in the first case on silos. It focuses on the sustainability department's struggle to understand the priorities of other departments while guaranteeing collaboration in implementing social and environmental projects. Without a transparent and coordinated approach to align such initiatives throughout the organization, sustainability can easily get lost amid several parallel initiatives (cf. Crilly, Zollo, & Hansen, 2012). In this particular case, I draw on boundary studies (Langley et al., 2019) to explain the process of negotiating boundaries that emerges from the realization of the adverse aspects of silos. Also, I use the literature on traditional management topics, such as integration (Greenwood & Miller, 2010; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967) and collaboration (Gulati, Wohlgezogen, & Zhelyazkov, 2012; Lawton, 2005) to explain how this tension between sustainability and other departments' goals needs to take into account broader organizational factors.

Perhaps the most challenging tension that sustainability engenders is between the short-term and long-term orientation (Hahn et al., 2015; Reinecke & Ansari, 2015; Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). While the dominant business logic presupposes rapid economic gains, sustainability brings the perspective of social and environmental aspects in a broader temporal dimension—that is, managers may make the best choice in the short term but with adverse effects in the long term (Hahn et al., 2015). This tension is in the background of the second paper that discusses the organization's biannual graduate scheme as part of its broader sustainability strategy. However, their lack of support to the trainees, in the long run, threatens the project's primary purpose: to develop the next generation of leaders in the organization. In this paper, I draw on corporate hypocrisy studies (Scheidler, Marie, Schons, Spanjol, & Wieseke, 2019; Wagner et al., 2009), as well as the concepts of fantasy and symptoms from psychoanalysis (Kenny, Haugh, & Fotaki, 2020; Lacan, 2006b), and Sloterdijk's (1984) notion of cynical reason. These studies facilitate my structuring of the idea of hypocrisy (re)construction. They also substantiate the conflict between the short and long-term perspectives of sustainability. Whereas a leadership project would aim to achieve a long-term objective, short-term interests and subjective fantasies sustain the continuation of such projects, albeit not reaching the initial sustainability goal.

Another tension that organizations may confront when implementing sustainability is the collision between isomorphic pressures to stabilize practices and the need for technological and structural changes that disrupt current practices (Hahn et al., 2015). Emerging social and environmental issues involve several complex and interconnected factors that organizations might not be willing, or have specific know-how, to integrate (Wijen, 2014, 2015). This conflict is present in the background of the third case of the thesis when the sustainability department decides to follow a market trend and implement diversity without considering the necessary structural changes. With a narrow focus on women in managerial positions, Globalcar overlooks other marginalized groups, most notably LGBTQIA+ employees who are targets of prejudice and stigmatization. Such biased treatment is especially blatant in a Latin American country where there is little governmental support for minorities, particularly sexual minorities. To exacerbate the situation, Globalcar’s leaders are continuously emphasizing that employees should use their social media profiles for work-related purposes. This request poses an additional layer of concern for these employees, as many of them perform some sort of identity work to hide their non-work identities. In this paper, I draw on concealable stigma (Jones & King, 2014; Stenger & Roulet, 2018) and identity work theories (Bataille & Vough, 2020), as well as social media and sexual minority studies (Banghart, Etter, & Stohl, 2018; Bazarova &

Choi, 2014; Cho, 2018) to explore the overlap between face-to-face and online interactions and its outcomes for sexual minorities. What emerges is the isomorphic tension in sustainability and the need to consider apparently disconnected factors even in relatively minor initiatives.

Analytically important, these various tensions are often intertwined in the same situation. For instance, the short-term perspective adopted in the organization's diversity initiatives may generate problems in the long term. The graduate scheme is an isomorphic practice among major organizations, and silos present a conflict between personal and organizational agendas. Consequently, there may be long-term impacts on the company’s results. Nonetheless, recognizing the internal tensions in an organization can help scholars and practitioners alike understand the problems that organizations face in this process of implementing sustainability (Hahn et al., 2015). Awareness of these tensions also deepens understanding of interrelationships among the different cases explored in my thesis, as well as the interconnections among usually unrelated streams of theory.

Finally, understanding how the cases are interrelated under the lens of sustainability tensions provides compelling theoretical opportunities. Even though studies on sustainability tensions are growing, only a few empirical cases reveal the challenges of acknowledging and dealing with them (Joseph, Borland, Orlitzky, & Lindgreen, 2020; Pinkse et al., 2019; Siltaloppi, Rajala, & Hietala, 2020). Most sustainability tension studies suggest that embracing such contradictions generates constructive answers, meaning that organizations navigate them and successfully implement initiatives (Hengst et al., 2020; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013).

A few studies have contested this view, suggesting that there might be unexplored nuances in addressing sustainability tensions, ultimately leading to different outcomes (Pinkse et al., 2019). Thus, by focusing on everyday interactions at Globalcar, this thesis can contribute to the existing literature on both tensions in sustainability implementation and specific streams of theory.

1.4 Overview of the thesis

Chapter 1 established the general context of the study and its importance. By outlining the main idea of tensions in sustainability implementation, it provides a helpful structure for examining the various problems I investigate through the sustainability team's daily experiences at Globalcar.

Chapter 2 introduces each of the cases discussed in the thesis. The first case focuses on the tensions between organizational silos and sustainability initiatives, generating a process of boundary negotiation that resulted in little organizational change. The second case explores tensions in Globalcar's biannual graduate scheme and the (re)construction of hypocrisy via cynical fantasies. The third case illustrates the tension in diversity practices, specifically the tension that arises when the organization intends to improve its initiatives but ignores stigmatized employees and the ubiquity of online interactions. The chapter ends with some of the theoretical contributions that the cases make.

Chapter 3 brings central reflexivity discussions to my problem-driven ethnographic approach (Reinecke et al., 2016). These reflections enrich the academic rigor of the thesis, as well as the data collection processes. I explain how my ontological predispositions, i.e., previous experiences, shape my understanding and analysis of Globalcar. I also explore the array of emotions I felt during my fieldwork and how they led me to pay more attention to specific situations, recognize my own subjectivity, and take the necessary measures to control it. I talk about the initial theoretical perspectives I considered for the study in an iterative inductive approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I then go on to explain how I eventually decided to follow different theoretical paths as I amplified my view about my research questions. Finally, understanding my role as an ethnographer, I adapted my methodological approach along the way as I considered the comments of peers and reviewers who motivated me to move towards new analytical paths. In the remainder of the chapter, I delineate the process of gaining access to the organization, my first impressions, and the different sources of information I used in the thesis.

Chapter 4 explores the first case, with the daily struggle not only to overcome departmental boundaries, or silos, but also to implement cross-departmental initiatives.

Chapter 5 discusses the second case. Here I explore one project illustrating the effects of the weak operationalization of sustainability: a biannual graduate scheme. In this chapter, my lens is directed at trainees' perceptions of corporate hypocrisy and the ways it can be reconstructed via cynical fantasies.

Chapter 6 focuses on diversity initiatives and examines how the specific group of gay employees, highly stigmatized at Globalcar, deals with the context collapse between face-to-face and online interactions.

Chapter 7 summarizes the study's main contributions, emphasizing how observing everyday activities at Globalcar helped me understand mechanisms and behaviors that hinder sustainability implementation. I also analyze some viable solutions to mitigate the tensions that I observed in the organization and explore the road ahead for sustainability implementation.

2. The emergence of research themes

While in the field, I was exposed to initially mundane situations that, over time, brought to light unexpected intricacies reflecting tensions in Globalcar's sustainability implementation. For instance, the situation of stigmatized employees at the company became a pressing problem that I observed during several weeks of conversations, meetings, and shadowing managers. The politically turbulent Latin America context was mirrored to some extent within Globalcar. Historically, the region has been ambiguous about minorities' rights, creating a precarious environment for the LGBTQIA+ community. Many gay employees were constant targets of "jokes" or even direct threats. Coupled with a growing uneasiness within the sustainability team about sensitive diversity topics, and my own beliefs and world views, this topic "emerged" from my data. In this sense, the papers I explore in this thesis are experimental, as each of the cases has its own life and was developed using different theoretical perspectives. In the following section, I introduce the overarching themes of each paper.

Exploring the silos

When I joined the company as an ethnographer in 2018, the sustainability team told me in one of our first discussions that since 2015, they have been trying to approach different departments at Globalcar to understand the connections between projects. What should have been a simple coordination endeavor turned out to be a complicated task. Since many functional teams had their specific goals and interests, some managers felt threatened by such an "invasion".

After extensive hours of conversation, observation and reflection, I realized that the sustainability initiatives at Globalcar were being undervalued. According to my informants, the expected goals were not being reached. This situation was puzzling to me. Even with strong support from senior management, the establishment of a sustainability team, an annual report, and a stakeholder matrix, sustainability had hardly become integrated across organizational departments and functions. In unraveling this puzzle, I understood that this lack of integration stems from the silos separating departments. Most big organizations struggle with communication and the alignment of activities at a certain point, be it between product lines, departments or subsidiaries (Aaker, 2008; Lessard & Zaheer, 1996; Monti, Soda, & Bizzi, 2014). A silo is an acute state of this miscommunication: a situation in which there is minimal collaboration and knowledge exchange between the parties (Lessard & Zaheer, 1996).

Over the years, Globalcar departments grew apart, each developing its own activities, processes, routines, and budgets. Working independently was normalized in the company. It should be noted that silos are not necessarily negative and can even benefit some organizations dealing with multiple and parallel activities that necessitate little alignment between different departments (Durand, Hawn, & Ioannou, 2016). Indeed, the automotive industry was traditionally divided into production silos, which allowed manufacturers to produce completely different cars simultaneously (Holz, Neumann, & Milkau, 2013). However, in an industry pressured to demonstrate rapid changes toward more efficient production, the cross-departmental logic of sustainability demands improvements in communication and the coordination of activities between departments.

The existence of silos constituted a problem for Globalcar's sustainability team in carrying out their day-to-day activities. This situation led to the creation of several silo-busting initiatives that were gradually undermined to the point that they became unsuccessful and the silos remained untouched. Given this backdrop, I explore the intricate relationship between silos and sustainability implementation, guided by the following research question:

How do organizational silos impact sustainability implementation?

Exploring the hypocrisy

While at Globalcar, the sustainability team introduced their main projects to me, including aspects to improve employees' well-being and the future of leadership in the organization. One of Globalcar's strategic initiatives connected to the social pillar of the organization's sustainability strategy is its biannual graduate scheme. Aimed at the hiring of young and ambitious graduates, the project attracts thousands of applicants in each training period, each vying for one of the coveted positions in the prestigious organization. Typically, no more than 20 candidates are hired per session, after a grueling selection process.

Tensions in the field emerged when, in my daily observations and interactions with trainees, I observed that the managers responsible for the project did not consider the long-term vision of developing trainees to become future leaders once they were hired. Whereas these managers proudly extolled the merits of their structured graduate scheme in a modern and flexible organization, the trainees complained about the unmet promises of rapid recognition in an archaic firm. In their estimation, Globalcar was hypocritical, bureaucratic and sluggish, providing little space for professional growth. Managers were quick to dismiss such criticisms, bluntly arguing that the trainees were immature and unfit for the organization.

According to the trainees, the managers were claiming undeserved moral benefits (Effron, Connor, Leroy, & Lucas, 2018). Although the managers seemed to be worried about Globalcar's future and trainees' development, their practices showed that they were thinking of short-term benefits only. Despite the accusations of hypocrisy leveled against them, the managers were eager to continue the project. This reaction is puzzling, as the literature typically describes cases in which hypocrisy is present in specific cases but then gives way to a change of practices (Wagner et al., 2019, 2009). Such endeavors to reach more consistent behaviors were witnessed at Globalcar when sustainability actions were incentivized after the 2015 scandal that shook up the sector. I thus explore this contentious graduate scheme and trainees' views of hypocrisy, guided by the following question:

How can hypocrisy be maintained over time, even when it is exposed and challenged?

Exploring the stigma

A final problem I noticed in the siloed environment of Globalcar is that the sustainability department was eager to demonstrate its relevance with projects that could improve social and environmental aspects internally. Meanwhile, the headquarters was structuring global diversity initiatives, and in the subsidiary's country, the sustainability manager decided that this situation could be used as an opportunity to promote certain important initiatives. Each subsidiary had the autonomy to analyze, define and prioritize the groups and activities they would implement, acknowledging that contextual factors could make specific topics more urgent than others. In the interpretation of Globalcar's context and role in the promotion of diversity, a tension emerged when the sustainability department decided to prioritize specific minority groups of employees over others.

Historically, in Latin America, overt misogyny, homophobia, and racism have been commonplace (Corrales, 2015; Malta et al., 2019). Globalcar, as a reflection of the society, became a hostile environment. The marginalization of blacks, sexual minorities, and peers from other regions of the country had already been normalized at the organization. Thus, any behavior straying from white male heteronormativity was discouraged. Despite the rising voices of minority rights activists around the world, resistance to diversity at Globalcar was mounting.

In this atmosphere of bigotry, the sustainability team responsible for encouraging diversity opted not to act to protect all minorities. Instead, it was decided that they would limit their intervention by concentrating their efforts on increasing the number of women in managerial positions, a relatively less controversial step. At the same time, some sustainability analysts felt uncomfortable with such a modest approach. However, the team did not understand how to improve their practices vis-a-vis other minority groups. In their view, monitoring the ascent of women to managerial positions was relatively straightforward, less polarizing and more likely to guarantee the cooperation of other departments. Understanding the potential for exploring other marginalized groups in the organization, I focus this third case on the identity management that gay men perform to integrate or segment their stigmas at Globalcar.

This action was particularly troubling for these employees. Many of them wanted to conceal or control how others perceived them at the organization, whereas there was growing call for employees to “come out” beyond organizational walls. Globalcar was incentivizing employees to use their social media sites to talk about the company’s initiatives. This could lead to more problems for already stigmatized groups, as private online information could be used against them in the hostile environment that Globalcar had become.

Therefore, I was presented with a confusing combination of factors: a violent context for stigmatized groups, narrow diversity initiatives, and incentives to use social networking sites. I could not understand how gay men, a highly stigmatized group of employees, performed identity work, now also on social networking sites. Such sites are non-places where different audiences cohabit, affecting all spheres of their lives, including at work. I investigate this case guided by the following question:

How do employees with concealable stigmas perform identity work in the interplay of the online and offline worlds at work?

3. Methods

This thesis is based on ethnographic observations, interviews, and documents as modes of inquiry. Ethnography encompasses the written account of individuals' routines, organized around a set of methods (e.g. interviews, document analysis) that foreground meaning and meaning-making, seeking the extraordinary in ordinary situations (Yanow et al., 2012). Given the exploratory nature of the study, these methods seemed appropriate, although they produce "sensuous bodily experience" (Zieman, 2012: 296), which demands some precautions and reflexivity about my role in the organization and the knowledge I produce (Cunliffe, 2010).

Consequently, in this chapter, I start by explaining how I conducted data collection broadly. I do not disclose the specific analytical steps of each part of the thesis at this point, as the papers already offer a thorough explanation about them. Following this explanation, I provide some reflections on my research experience.

3.1 Data collection

Globalcar was one of the companies to which I formally sent a research proposal. First, I sent a letter to the vice-president of HR, as I had read in the company's sustainability report that such activities fell under her area of responsibility. She responded enthusiastically a few days later, requesting that I communicate directly with the sustainability manager and prepare all that would be necessary for my fieldwork. After many rounds of talks with the sustainability team, I reached an agreement. I would participate in the company's activities for four months in 2018.

Observations

I was assigned to the sustainability department and observed the activities at Globalcar daily for a total of 480 hours. Given the limitations explained above, I was struggling during the first weeks to understand how I could glean substantial information from the sustainability team. The two sustainability analysts remained the whole day doing their own work on their computers. The manager was preoccupied with external activities, and the intern was still trying to get me a computer. Nobody really knew what I was doing there. Realizing this problem in the first days, I scheduled a meeting with the sustainability team so I could explain my objectives briefly and get their feedback. They were not too receptive to my idealistic view of the sustainability department as an aggregator of scattered activities in the organization.

At first, I thought they were just trying to avoid doing their sustainability work, but they soon explained that they had already tried to interact and coordinate activities with other parts of the organization, but for some reason, they were not attaining their expected objectives. They showed me the main activities they were working on. I was disappointed to learn that they were mainly responsible for peripheral or low-impact activities in the company. Still, they said that they could schedule meetings with other departments that they believed had some involvement with sustainability so that I could grasp the different possible connections between departments.

These meetings were a turning point in the data collection phase, as I had access to managers of 17 different departments of the organization. One of the conversations I had was with the graduate scheme team who portrayed a perfect Globalcar that I had never seen or heard of before. These interactions later triggered the second paper, as this project was also a concern that the sustainability team shared. Given the informal atmosphere in these meetings, I did not want to record our conversations, but after each encounter, I would rapidly go back to my computer to write down what we had discussed: the surprising aspects, or even mere descriptions of projects. The sustainability analysts were quite curious about my meetings as well, so after each conversation, we used to discuss what happened, and they also gave me their opinions and counterarguments or suggested next steps.

In addition to those conversations with the sustainability team, various simple daily activities became instrumental as the weeks passed. I explain them in the section on methodological reflexivity. Furthermore, I started shadowing the sustainability analysts in their activities and meetings and scheduled a weekly meeting with the sustainability manager to share my perceptions, check information, and elaborate on some arguments. Finally, every week the manager held a staff meeting to update the team on essential current issues at the organization and to give team members an opportunity to report on their weekly activities. In my first meeting with them, the sustainability manager warned me: "Please, do not take notes about these meetings, as the information we share here is extremely confidential." After that initial meeting, I was excited, curious about what could come next. I assumed that the information must be highly classified. On the contrary, in subsequent meetings, the manager usually talked about sales numbers or random policies the company was implementing (e.g. what to do in case we spot lost dogs within the plant). Even so, being allowed to see and critically analyze these episodes was why I was there, and in a sense, I was glad that I had been invited to the meetings.

While I attempted to write down my experiences, feelings and perceptions as soon as possible, many times I had to review my notes after leaving the worksite for the day to make sure my accounts were sufficiently clear and detailed. Consequently, even though I formally accumulated 480 hours spread over the working days, the actual number was significantly higher when factoring in those extra hours during the night shift.

Interviews

After one month in the field, and with adequate understanding of Globalcar's primary sustainability problems, I decided to start interviewing employees and managers in the company. Approaching the interviews in a reflexivist manner, in which the process of interviewing matters (Alvesson & Ashcraft, 2012), I worried about what, who and how to ask.

To begin, I prepared an interview protocol with questions about silos, collaboration, and sustainability initiatives. I decided to interview all employees from the sustainability, organization design and debureaucratization departments, because those were the ones with whom I had daily contact. Also, I anticipated that some interviews would not be as useful as others, so by interviewing all of them, I would maximize the potential of the variability of themes and aspects to consider. At first, I used a convenience sampling technique (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Later, I asked each of my initial interviewees to point out managers and employees in the organization who could help me understand the initial problems, thereafter following a snowballing technique (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

At this stage, some interviewees suggested that I interview participants from the graduate scheme because they had participated in a job rotation scheme that gives them a perspective from different departments. Their perspectives could help me understand the difficulties in achieving collaboration. I had already observed some meetings and conversations with the HR team responsible for the project. After the first interviews with some participants, I realized that they were dissatisfied with the project and the company, as they voiced strong perceptions of hypocrisy that contradicted what the managers had told me. In response, I decided to create a second interview protocol to investigate this problem, and I scheduled interviews with all the trainees from the 2016 cohort. Again, by interviewing the entire population for this specific case, I aimed at maximizing the variation in responses, examples and possible categories to explore later (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

As for the third paper, during my first conversations and interviews with the sustainability team, diversity emerged clearly as a key priority. The team was structuring actions to increase the number of women in managerial positions, and one of the sustainability analysts was in frequent communication with the headquarters to align the next steps. In my original interview protocol, I was already asking questions about diversity, how employees defined it, and whether they thought the company was on the right track, considering their current actions. However, when I interviewed openly gay employees, I realized that this group of employees was highly marginalized, especially with the growing demands from senior management to use social network sites for work related purposes. I then decided to create a third protocol for stigmatized employees at the organization.

Having three different interview protocols made some interviews much longer and more profound than others. Indeed, the process of conducting the interviews with such a large number of employees from different departments, often asking about very personal issues, was not easy. Many gay employees were afraid to talk to me. I was also cautious about interviewing them, as the research proposal that had been approved by Globalcar's top managers did not state clearly that I would be investigating such contentious and personal topics. To avoid any problems, I consulted the sustainability analyst responsible for diversity actions about these interviews, and I did not advertise this part of the company's project. Instead, I adopted a semi-covert approach (Roulet, Gill, Stenger, & Gill, 2017) that minimized the potential risks during the research. Even so, in some situations, I had to handle suspicious e-mails and phone calls from employees who were not open in the workplace about their sexual orientation. Their hesitancy only reinforced the need for this type of research.

The last interviews for this case introduced new examples, although they did not substantially modify the broader categories I had mapped out with the first interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Given the aforementioned emotionally charged content of these conversations, I continued the interviews until I left Globalcar. I noticed that many of the interviewees were enjoying the opportunity to talk about their problems with an "outsider". In total, 73 semi-structured interviews were conducted.

Documents and short videos

Close to the end of my period at Globalcar, I collected documents and presentations from the various sustainability initiatives of the company. I asked the sustainability intern to download what she thought could be useful. She kindly searched for all news articles with the keyword "sustainability" since 2016. Also, the sustainability analysts told me that the company used to have a printed magazine about the graduate scheme, which was distributed to the whole company. They managed to find the files on the intranet and send them to me, together with the main presentations they had produced about their activities over the years.

Besides these internal materials, several reports and videos were publicly available. The sustainability reports of the company were on their website, while the graduate scheme had its own portal with several speeches from previous and current trainees. This information was key during the development of the papers, complementing and reinforcing many of the observations and interviews.

3.2 Different levels of reflexivity

Ethnography involves an understanding of how it is to be the other (Van Maanen, 2011; Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009). In this process, I entered the field with preconceived ideas, life experiences, and certain expectations concerning methodology and theory. All of these factors had some influence on how I processed the knowledge I gathered from my daily observations and interviews. Even though qualitative approaches acknowledge the impossibility of being entirely analytically atheoretical and objective (Corbin & Strauss, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a certain level of reflexivity is crucial to increase the transparency and trustworthiness of my analysis (Haynes, 2012; Jonsen, Fendt, & Sébastien Point, 2018; Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009). Reflexivity is the exercise of "thinking about how our thinking came to be, how a pre-existing understanding is constantly revised in the light of new understandings and how this in turn affects our research." (Haynes, 2012: 73) In this sense, there are many reflexivity levels, some of which were already described in previous sections of this thesis. For instance, thinking of this study's motivations makes explicit some of the preconceptions, experiences, and expectations that I brought with me to the field. In this subsection, I explore additional levels of reflexivity. For clarity, I will analyze each level separately, even though they co-exist and influence my epistemological process.

As one of the first ethnographic exercises of my PhD research, I use notes from my previous professional experiences that I wrote in the form of a "memory book". I also use my fieldnotes from Globalcar to critically interpret my own interpretations (Haynes, 2012). In terms of the writing style of this section, I engage in an analytic auto-ethnography (Humphreys & Learmonth, 2012) that allows me to explain some implications of these experiences in my knowledge creation process.

There are two main reasons why I decided to write down these reflections. First, I was constrained by journal format guidelines during the crafting of the cases, and many important considerations were left out from my academic papers. Second, my own positionality has a profound impact on how I collect and analyze data. Although all the knowledge presented here was derived from conversations with colleagues (e.g. supervisors; friendly and anonymous reviewers; editors; conveners; conference peers), a doctoral thesis can reflect a personal touch, which, in my view, is enhanced by these detailed clarifications.

Ontological reflexivity

This level of reflexivity relates to how we, as researchers, see the world, our values, and choices, and how they influence us. Ontological reflexivity also concerns how our views are influenced by our chosen theories and methodologies (Haynes, 2012). In this vein, I started my career as a deeply passionate (even naïve) sustainability researcher, conducting projects in partnership with different organizations. Later, I worked for several years in a company in the automotive sector. These experiences showed me, on many occasions, that sustainability discourses are commonly not followed by practice. As I began my study at Globalcar, I had an extremely critical attitude. I expected the company to be, to some extent, incompetent and amateur in its endeavors towards sustainability. Some experiences that led me to these expectations are summarized in the following vignette about my job interview and later experience at one of my previous employers.

Vignette – Ontological reflexivity –Last week I interviewed a nice young lady for this position, but she was a biologist, so I couldn't hire her, because biology has nothing to do with our activities. Our boss was really upset with me because of this." This speech is from a job interview I had with my future direct supervisor at one of my previous workplaces. He was explaining to me that he had unintentionally created a misleading job description for the position. He needed somebody to monitor the post-implementation phase of one of the projects they had in their department. Because of the idea of preserving the project in the long-term, they titled this phase "sustainability". So far, all the applicants were specialists on environmental aspects, even though the core activities of the job were related to general project management. Looking back at this situation, I realize this was a preview of what I would experience in the years to come in the organization: an accumulation of surreal activities with unclear purposes or poor results.

I was soon bombarded by what seemed to me far-fetched project names, managers taking what seemed to me arbitrary decisions, meetings with complex numbers and acronyms. In the beginning, I gave the company the benefit of the doubt, as I could not believe that a well-known organization would be so confusing. "Maybe these situations are showing me my own cognitive limitations", I thought sometimes. However, little by little, I realized these surreal cases were indeed signs of organizational bullshit. The complexity of the tasks was minimized to the point that I could not understand how those small actions would contribute to the major goals they had set. When I looked around, nobody really knew what we were doing on some projects.

Years passed, and the pervasive routinization of social behavior exerted its power: what was once absurd became standard, and I naturally became part of the organization's norms, eventually also reproducing them. I did not question the way things were any longer. After all, I had an excellent job in a stable company in a highly unstable country.

This vignette demonstrates how I was initially surprised by the confusing scenario at my previous workplace. I even questioned whether I was the problem. After understanding the situation, I became part of it, albeit unconsciously at that time. This narrative is extremely revealing about my own ontology. Based on my previous work experiences, I was expecting organizational members involved in my PhD research to be so immersed in their contexts that perhaps they did not even realize that they were becoming part of the problem, reproducing the *status quo*. Before embarking on my fieldwork on sustainability efforts at Globalcar, I had expected failures, incompetence and extraordinarily little understanding about sustainability in general.

Did I change these views during my research? Some of my critical assumptions were confirmed, yet I toned down my harshest conclusions that could obscure nuanced explanations about the problems I noticed at Globalcar. For instance, I now believe that assuming that the company is incompetent in sustainability implementation is a rather sloppy analysis of superficial events. Implementing sustainability can be extremely complex, and even if Globalcar's sustainability team members were honestly trying, they were missing many specific aspects that, together, led to failure. Summarizing these difficulties as incompetence did not help me understand and spot the organization's problems, which had been one of my main objectives.

Furthermore, since I had participated in several previous projects in partnership with other organizations, one of my premises when I started studying Globalcar was that my presence should have a positive impact on their sustainability activities. I wanted to offer my opinions and suggestions about the problems the company was facing. Thus, I had to analyze my extremely critical views about the world, capitalism and even leadership in general. I did not want them to obfuscate my lens to the point that they impeded possible improvement paths. With that said, the paper on the (re)construction of hypocrisy is still quite critical. At the same time, I also believe that such a perspective can provoke change, perhaps not necessarily at Globalcar, but in the way we view organizational practices. Therefore I have attempted to achieve a balance in terms of my criticality, reflecting these ontological expectations. As I understood the sustainability team's daily struggles, I moved to theoretical explanations that could capture the nuances I observed instead of adopting a critical approach throughout my thesis.

Emotional reflexivity

Another form of reflexivity is emotional reflexivity. It draws on emotions to evaluate how daily social behaviors are interpreted and reproduced, shifting, or focusing the researcher's analysis (Haynes, 2012). As an ethnographer, I had to be reflexive about my emotions in the field, and how they revealed nuances in my observations (Cunliffe, 2010; Van Maanen, 2011). While at Globalcar, I felt stressed, angry, confused, sad, tired, excited and elated. Some of these emotions might become transparent in the way I portray the episodes in this thesis, whereas others, after many rounds of revision, might be in the background of my analysis. First, I felt stressed about returning to an environment that I knew was unhealthy for me. Even though I was in an entirely different company from that of my previous employer, I had the same strange feeling of worrying about each word I uttered, about my movements within the organization. In sum, a feeling of being judged continuously that caused me considerable stress. This sentiment was probably stronger than it was when I was actually employed in the automotive sector—because now I was an "external researcher". I was an outsider and the Globalcar employees did not understand exactly what I was doing there. Furthermore, every day, after eight hours of observations, I still had to review, rewrite and complement my notes, which made me relive such situations, hence prolonging and exacerbating my stress. This situation had a significant impact on my approach, as I was constantly considering how others were interpreting my moves and speeches.

During the first few weeks of observations, I felt angry and confused because I realized that many people did not trust me or were afraid of me. "Why did they accept me here, if they are reluctant to help me?" I asked myself several times. This was an important question, because later I understood that contrary to my fears, they were not trying to undermine my research. Sometimes they simply did not have anything specific to show me, or help me with, as some of their projects were failing. Some were even embarrassed that I was there, coming from London to study their sustainability initiatives, and they did not have any substantial results to share with me.

The sustainability team was continuously demonstrating failure, be it by directly complaining about a specific project, or by their awkward silences and exchanged looks when

I asked about a specific result. This situation saddened me, prompting me to look for alternatives to help them, based on their current projects. Such reflection stimulated me to pay closer attention to the diversity actions they were developing, which later became the basis for the third paper of my thesis. And then I felt sad again when I interviewed some of the gay men at Globalcar. They opened up to me about many disturbing experiences of marginalization and persecution at the company.

After a long day of interviews, observations and meetings, I was left emotionally drained yet emotionally charged. I felt excited about my research on sexual minorities at Globalcar. It was compelling to see such an important topic develop and gain shape. I soon realized how important the project was, not only because of its theoretical developments, but also because of the network of employees I was mapping in the organization. I was giving them the opportunity to talk freely about their daily suffering with an “outsider”. I was perhaps giving them some hope of change at the organization. Finally, when I presented my initial results and suggestions to the team, I felt elated to notice that my ideas could contribute to the development of their practices.

Thus, the mix of emotions I felt in the field influenced my research steps inside and outside Globalcar, as many of the topics I focused on here are those I felt strongly about. These feelings also pushed me into being more creative in my approach. As I felt angry, I tried to find ways to gain trust. As I felt sad, I tried to find ways to help those in suffering, and as I felt excited, I was inspired to structure my analysis in different ways that would reflect my Globalcar experiences.

Subjective reflexivity

Subjective reflexivity involves the possible dual positions that researchers have in the field, such as being both the study’s object and its subject. It might also be a case in which we, as researchers, are on the borderline of academia, often crossing the lines and becoming part of the group we are researching (Haynes, 2012). Therefore, it is important to think about the possible implications of this ambiguous positionality for the knowledge we create.

In the case of this thesis, I am extremely close to my research topics, and I see no attendant ethical concerns as long as I am constantly questioning myself and ensuring that my approaches allow me to move beyond what I already know or expect. This view is supported by several qualitative studies. They indicate that being close to the field can actually help the researcher navigate the intricacies and nuances of everyday activities (cf. Fuller, 1999; Hamal, 2020; Kanuha, 2000). For instance, the challenge of coordinating sustainability initiatives with different parts of the organization is a situation I have experienced before in my own employment history. Even though I had a strong position about it, I tried to keep my mind open and expand my view to avoid becoming trapped in a process or reinforcing my preconceptions, using theoretical concepts to disguise them. In this sense, I am constantly sharing my analysis with different audiences, "testing the waters", trying to capture aspects that I had not previously considered. Triangulation of data also helped, although one runs the risk of looking for confirmation of the same preconceived ideas using different data sources. Again, this rigorous questioning about whether my findings are just supporting what I already knew, or bringing something new to the table, forced me out of my comfort zone several times.

Overall, this thesis contains my DNA, which does not contradict my constant worries about the traditional "academic rigor" (Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). On the contrary, I passionately believe that by drawing upon my personal experience in my analysis of the cases, I can offer unique, more meaningful accounts of social reality.

Theoretical reflexivity

Theoretical reflexivity is related to the theoretical preconceptions that the researcher brings when entering the field, as well as the process of revisiting them as the data collection and analysis processes evolve (Haynes, 2012). Many of the previous reflexivity aspects already touched upon some of the theoretical ideas I had when I started my research. Concretely, one of the main streams of theory I had in mind was institutional decoupling (Bromley & Powell, 2012; Wijen, 2014), which allowed me to explain these disconnections between the policies, practices, and outcomes I was observing. Some remnants of this literature can still be found in my thesis, but I moved considerably to other paths as I developed my ideas, shared my thoughts with colleagues, and read previous studies on related cases. Being open to various possible theoretical explanations for my findings also helped me reflect upon other aspects. For instance, by being pushed to investigate the boundary literature (Langley et al., 2019) to explain the problem of silos between departments, I could move beyond my own subjective predispositions and thereby avoid using my findings for the confirmation of my previous experiences.

Likewise, as I submitted the different papers to conferences and journals, I was pushed to incorporate streams of theory I had not considered before. For instance, I did not know that corporate hypocrisy was a growing academic concern until I saw a call for papers on it. Consequently, I could see how my studies could partially contribute to its understanding. Of course, the theories I am adopting in this thesis are only possibilities to structure my analysis, as there could be many other approaches that I was not aware of or did not contemplate when crafting the papers.

Methodological reflexivity

Finally, it is important to discuss methodological reflexivity. It relates to the revision of methodologies over time in the field, re-evaluating the effectiveness of data collection approaches and often considering aspects such as ethics, power relationships, and language (Haynes, 2012). Being an ethnographer for the first time is scary. Guides on different methods cannot give us the true panorama of what happens in the field, as it is highly context-dependent. Nonetheless, I tried to prepare as much as possible before starting my fieldwork at Globalcar. Joffe, Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1996) provided useful ideas about the main aspects I should focus on. In addition, I was highly inspired by books such as *On the Run* (Goffman, 2009) and *Liquidated* (Ho, 2009). Therefore, when I finally arrived at Globalcar, I was eager to collect as much data as possible, despite my uncertainty about how I would conduct this data collection without access to the system or anybody else besides the sustainability team.

I soon realized why books typically do not offer a "how-to" guide for ethnographic research—because anything can happen in the field. I had assumed that observing others would be an easy task, but I was not considering that many people would be resistant to my observations or would try to hide information. I then had to adapt. I started paying attention to every event that was happening in the surrounding departments so that I could try to participate as well. I realized that at Globalcar (and probably most organizations) the "pot of gold" was in the informal interactions. I never drank so much coffee, never ate so many nibblies, never sang so many happy birthdays in my life. I was in every gossip clique (often with confidential information - Fan, Grey, & Kärreman, 2020), and I enjoyed informal snacks or walks in the factory. I even participated in firefighting training with the team, which initially had nothing to do with my research. In sum, as I learned about the organizational routines, I incorporated new data collection strategies. In retrospect, I realize that these experiences went a long way in enriching my picture of Globalcar.

During and after my fieldwork at the company, the ethical implications of my approach became a concern. After some time, it happened rather naturally that I was no longer seen as much as an outsider by those with whom I interacted daily (about 20 employees in the department). However, I was an outsider, and I am analyzing the experiences and perceptions of these employees in this thesis. To mitigate this “double agent” role, I reminded those around me on several occasions that I was conducting research and that I was an external person, not a member of any Globalcar department. I even gave them a course on qualitative analysis (including how to use Nvivo) so that they understood how the information they were giving me would be used. In general, I believe that my approach worked, although the boundaries between personal and professional information were often blurry.

During the data analysis and the “crafting” of the three papers, I changed my positionality many times, adjusting my understandings and explanations about Globalcar according to the theories I used in my analyses and the discussions I had with my co-authors. The article about the (re)construction of hypocrisy, for example, started as a realistic ethnography (Cunliffe, 2010), in which I was attempting to present Globalcar “as is”. However, as I incorporated more critical approaches about capitalism and psychoanalytical concepts that trump the idea of “objective truth”, I also moved my methods to a more critical approach, revealing more reflexivity and explaining how this case captures an angle of social reality based on my experiences in the field, and not an absolute truth.

Despite my move towards subjectivity, I followed realistic ethnographic steps to structure my analysis for this paper, using traditional coding structures (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and process analysis (Langley, 1999). I believe that the mixture of critical and realistic ethnography styles made this article more compelling and structured. Furthermore, adopting a coding structure helped me transform the immense number of coinciding events in the story into more manageable pieces that were later organized more clearly.

In the next three chapters, I explore the different everyday tensions I experienced at Globalcar, starting with the problems of silos for sustainability implementation.

4. Organizational silos as a barrier to sustainability implementation[1]

This is just like school assignments, you know? When we divide the tasks, each one makes one part, and then we put them together. The result is horrible, and nobody knows anything. If we don't do this together, we'll not find a way! (HR manager, Globalcar)

Outside Globalcar (fictional name), the Latin American subsidiary of one of the world's largest multinational car manufacturers, its latest models were rolling out from its modern factory, having been assembled from thousands of parts sourced from its just-in-time supply chain. Inside, however, managers were struggling to put together the parts of Globalcar's sustainability strategy, as indicated in the quote above. The HR manager was expressing his frustration after a grueling, eight-hour meeting with members of the sustainability department who were supposed to coordinate social and environmental projects across departments.

In 2015, in the wake of the VW diesel emissions scandal, the global automotive sector came under increasing pressure to demonstrate its sustainability commitments (cf. Gardiner, 2019). Since then, sustainability also became a top management priority and part of Globalcar's strategic plan. There was substantial support from the headquarters and top-level management. Also, a senior management-led sustainability department was established to coordinate and align activities. Despite all these efforts, sustainability implementation at Globalcar has been plagued by what respondents commonly describe as organizational "silos". This word is used metaphorically by organizational members to characterize the lack of interaction and alignment between organizational departments and functions (Aaker, 2008; Lencioni, 2006; Lessard &

[1] Professor Juliane Reinecke and Dr Michael Etter are co-authors of this paper. Thus, the text is written in third-person plural. As mentioned in the preface, the article has been discussed in several occasions, and will be soon submitted to the Academy of Management Journal (target journal).

Zaheer, 1996). While helpful for promoting agility and autonomy in different automobile production lines (Holz et al., 2013), silos have proven to be a major obstacle for Globalcar in its attempts to integrate sustainability into its core management functions. Such an effort demands a certain degree of cross-departmental collaboration (Dyllick & Muff, 2016). Accordingly, our aim in this paper is to unravel the following question: *How do organizational silos impact sustainability implementation?*

This question is important because sustainability implementation is one of the most pressing and strategic goals for organizations today (Bansal & Song, 2017; Hengst et al., 2020) Even so, it also creates several competing and sometimes contradictory social, environmental, and economic concerns that organizations frequently fail to conciliate (Hahn et al., 2018, 2015; Pinkse et al., 2019; Van der Byl & Slawinski, 2015a). This situation is substantiated in the literature by several cases of decoupling between policies, practices, and outcomes in sustainability implementation (Bromley & Powell, 2012; Crilly et al., 2012; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Wijen, 2014), as well as cases of corporate hypocrisy (Wagner et al., 2019, 2009) and greenwashing (Bowen, 2014; Roulet & Touboul, 2015).

Thus, research has centered mainly on difficulties in addressing competing financial, social, and environmental goals (Hahn et al., 2015) to explain why implementation efforts often fail. In addition to balancing corporate priorities (Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Elkington, 1998, 2004), organizations face an extraordinary coordination challenge in this process. This challenge is the general focus of this study. To translate sustainability commitments into practice, the various departments within complex organizations must collaborate (cf. Gulati et al. 2012).

In this sense, it is imperative that sustainability be integrated into core management practices, giving new relevance to the classic management problem of differentiation and integration (Barki & Pinsonneault, 2005; Greenwood & Miller, 2010; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). In multi-faceted organizations, with typically high functional differentiation, managers must reconcile the need for specialization with the need for daily coordination and cooperation (Gulati et al., 2012). Despite the mounting evidence of coordination problems between organizational functions (Ambekar, Kapoor, Prakash, & Patyal, 2019; Fayezi, Zomorrodi, & Bals, 2018; Schneider et al., 2014), this issue has received insufficient attention in the sustainability literature.

Here, we argue that daily internal implementation struggles might hinder sustainability initiatives (cf. Hengst et al., 2020), particularly in contexts where each department is highly specialized, leaving little space for the integration of sustainability projects. Hence, we investigate the sustainability implementation at Globalcar, an organization with *silos*: an extreme case of functional specialization. We draw on an ethnographic study, consisting of 480 hours of observations over four months, company documents, and 73 in-depth semi-structured interviews. In our analysis, to help make sense of the data, we also turned to organizational boundary literature (Langley et al., 2019; Strauss et al., 1994).

We reveal that the silos, over time, can become a self-reinforcing process. This means that teams working within silos tend to reinforce them in their activities. We label this process as *silofication* to emphasize the persistent dearth of collaboration and knowledge exchange between working teams. This silofication process highlights organizations as *polities* (Weber & Waeger, 2017), where managers (and their respective departments) have different interests and goals and vie for limited resources in “turf wars” (Lencioni, 2006). It was the growing pressure for sustainability implementation at Globalcar that exposed the problems of silos, challenging managers and employees to confront them. In a movement to negotiate boundaries between departments, several “silo-busting” initiatives were created to break down departmental walls. These efforts, in turn, triggered attempts to defend the existing boundaries. As a result, the silo-busting initiatives deteriorated over time, ironically reinforcing the silos.

As an unintended consequence, silos persist, and sustainability continues to be marginalized across the organization.

Our research advances understanding of the micro-dynamics of sustainability implementation. By considering the integration challenge (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967) in sustainability implementation, we demonstrate how the everyday inter-departmental interactions can become quite political. They matter as much as the embracing of possible tensions between financial, environmental and social goals, which has received the most attention in the literature to date (Hahn et al., 2018). We explain that organizations might "muddle through" even when sustainability is legitimate (Hengst et al., 2020), and there is managerial support and consensus regarding its importance (Crilly et al., 2012).

Furthermore, our study contributes to organizational boundary studies. We answer the call for a more nuanced perspective on the "saying and doings" (Langley et al., 2019: 727) involved in boundary work. Whereas previous studies have shown how negotiated orders are influenced by local conditions (Strauss et al., 1994), we are concerned with identifying micro-strategies that various teams and managers adopt to influence the shaping of boundaries between sustainability and other organizational functions. One implication arising from our research is how broader organizational attempts at blurring boundaries can coexist with daily contradictory actions from those who discursively support change, thus leading to the maintenance of current social orders (Allen, 2008; Strauss et al., 1994).

4.1 Literature review

Sustainability implementation: the integration challenge

There is increasing scholarly interest in sustainability implementation, reflecting the growing pressure for organizations to consider social and environmental perspectives in their activities (e.g. Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Hengst et al., 2020; Pomering & Dolnicar, 2009; Sandhu& Kulik, 2019; Soderstrom & Weber, 2020). The more we know about the intricacies involved in such implementations, the clearer it becomes that integrating sustainability into management systems creates many challenges (Hahn et al., 2015; Hengst et al., 2020; Pinkse et al., 2019).

Indeed, organizations frequently fail at sustainability implementation (cf. Crilly et al., 2012; Wijen, 2014), and research has focused primarily on the complexities in addressing competing objectives in carrying out sustainability initiatives (Hahn et al., 2018, 2015; Pinkse et al., 2019; Van der Byl & Slawinski, 2015a). For instance, Wright et al. (2012) point to how sustainability managers struggle through their daily managerial practice to overcome the contradictions between environmental and economic goals. Similarly, Demers and Gond (2020) trace how organizational actors negotiate compromises between economic prosperity, social well-being, and environmental health in implementing the sustainability strategy within an oil sands company. In the same vein, Hengst et al. (2020) address the legitimation process of integrating sustainability strategies into core management functions.

More generally, such studies argue that embracing these tensions that sustainability generates is the first step to resolving them (Hahn et al., 2015; Pinkse et al., 2019; Van der Byl & Slawinski, 2015a). Such a resolution approach is followed by the adoption of auxiliary tools that allow organizations to capture different aspects of sustainability, for example, through integrated reports (Junior, Best, & Cotter, 2014) and scorecards (Figge, Hahn, Schaltegger, & Wagner, 2002; Rohm, 2011).

Beyond understanding why sustainability efforts are unsuccessful, here we argue that merely balancing corporate priorities does not go far enough. Although equalizing social and environmental preoccupations to the mainstream economic activities (Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Elkington, 1998, 2004) is central, organizations must also deal with a more fundamental and extraordinary coordination task in this process. To translate sustainability commitments into practice, it is imperative that different departments within complex organizations collaborate with each other (cf. Gulati et al. 2012).

Arguably, for sustainability to become more than superficial rhetoric to enhance a company's public image, it must be integrated into core management practices, giving new relevance to the familiar management problem of reconciling integration and differentiation in complex organizations (Barki & Pinsonneault, 2005; Greenwood & Miller, 2010; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). In this context, integration denotes "…the process of achieving unity of effort among the various subsystems in the accomplishment of the organization's task" (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967, p. 4). Sustainability integration, in this sense, occurs when such implementation transcends business functions, being an integral part of corporate strategies (Hengst et al., 2020). In contrast, differentiation is understood "as the state of segmentation of the organizational system into subsystems, each of which tends to develop particular attributes in relation to the requirements posed by its relevant external environment." (Lawrence & Lorsch 1967, p. 3). This process refers to functional specialization, with the structuring of departments such as marketing, human resources, compliance, and production lines.

Integration and differentiation are essentially antagonistic. In other words, the more differentiation an organization creates in its functional subunits, the less integrated they are (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). According to Pugh and Hickson (2007), a higher differentiation between subunits also increases the chances for "…interdepartmental conflict as the specialist groups develop their own ways of dealing with the particular uncertainties" that are peculiar to their individual contexts; also, such "differences are not just minor variations in outlook but may involve fundamental ways of thinking and behaving" (Pugh and Hickson, 2007, pp. 58–63). Nonetheless, in major and complex organizations with typically high functional differentiation, managers must reconcile the need for specialization with the need for daily coordination and cooperation (Gulati et al., 2012).

It should be acknowledged that sustainability implementation requires a certain degree of differentiation in the definition of corporate objectives, projects, and roles (cf. Sandhu & Kulik, 2019). The crucial point, however, is that sustainability is not just a project. It is a demanding life-cycle problem that requires full integration from product and service designs to sourcing, from production and manufacturing to distribution, from marketing strategies to end-of-life disposals (Buxel, Esenduran, & Griffin, 2015; Kok, de Bakker, & Groenewegen, 2019; Lauriano, Spitzeck, & Bueno, 2014). Consequently, most social and environmental dimensions of sustainability necessitate ongoing collaboration and communication among different organizational subunits, with departments working together to solve complicated problems (Hengst et al., 2020; Soderstrom & Weber, 2020).

Surprisingly, most studies on sustainability implementation have overlooked this renewed debate on a classic management discussion: that is, contrasting the mounting evidence of coordination challenges between organizational functions. For instance, some studies have highlighted that companies typically separate their sustainability functions from their sourcing and purchasing functions, leading to strong differentiation in terms of roles, targets, and daily interactions with other parts of the organizations (Ambekar et al., 2019; Fayezi et al., 2018; Schneider et al., 2014). In some cases, the internal lack of communication is so glaring that different subunits (e.g. compliance, procurement, sustainability) act independently from one another (Reinecke, Donaghey, Bocken, & Lauriano, 2019; Schneider et al., 2014).

Likewise, other studies have supported the need for better integration between sustainability and several other business functions, including human resources (DuBois & Dubois, 2012; Guerci, Radaelli, Siletti, Cirella, & Rami Shani, 2015) quality management (Siva, Gremyr, & Halldórsson, 2018) and supply chain relationships (Amengual, Distelhorst,

& Tobin, 2020; Reinecke et al., 2019), to name a few. Therefore, sustainability implementation requires both the balancing of competing goals and a high level of integration across different functional departments. While the task of implementation is problematic in itself, many organizations present the additional challenge of an extreme extent of functional specialization. In such cases, departments become silos, leaving little opportunity for the consensus building and collaboration required for successful sustainability implementation.

Organizational Silos

The word "silo" refers to the cylindrical-shaped, metallic structure used in agriculture to store grains. Typically, each silo contains only one type of grain (Aaker, 2008; de Waal, Weaver, Day, & van der Heijden, 2019). As a metaphor used by organizational members, silos are discursive, meaning that one cannot touch the silos, or see them in organizational diagrams and hierarchies. Nevertheless, like other concepts in management that are often abstract at first, such as 'culture' (Pettigrew, 1979) and 'identity' (Brown & Lewis, 2011), the existence of silos can lead to serious, concrete implications for organizations.

Viewed positively, silos presuppose that subunits have a significant degree of autonomy, expediting decision-making and problem-solving processes (de Waal et al., 2019). In the automotive industry, for example, silos between production lines were standard for decades, providing faster decisions and adaptations (Holz et al., 2013). In fact, they have even been linked to the reduction of coordination costs (Faes, Matthyssens, & Vandenbempt, 2000; Foerstl, Hartmann, Wynstra, & Moser, 2013) This is particularly apparent in contrast to the past when departments were highly interdependent, and there was a need for agreement and approval from different parties (de Waal et al., 2019; Stone, 2004). Furthermore, silos can serve as an efficient way to motivate and unite teams by delimiting boundaries that distinguish "us" from "them" (Diamond & Allcorn, 2003). Thus, silos might stimulate healthy competition between departments that might contribute to operational agility (Bengtsson, Kock, Lundgren-Henriksson, & Näsholm, 2016; Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher, & Gurau, 2016). Silos constitute a recurrent organizational phenomenon, since most organizations tend to create differentiated subunits at some point, with limited integration between them (de Waal et al., 2019; Stone, 2004).

However, when organizational members characterize their departments as silos, they usually refer to the negative aspects of isolation and lack of communication with other parts of their organization (de Waal et al., 2019; Diamond, Allcorn, & Stein, 2004). Indeed, the expected interdepartmental conflicts in highly differentiated environments are exacerbated between silos, and political issues might become the norm. When these divisions deepen, the resulting paucity of communication, knowledge transfer, and collaboration might become more acute, leading to the normalization of teams working in isolation from each other within the same company (Cilliers & Greyvenstein, 2012; Karube, Fukukawa, & Drori, 2016). In this context, what was once healthy competition between teams caused by their differentiation can grow into internal "turf wars" for power and resources (Lencioni, 2006; Serrat & Serrat, 2017).

The inherent political dimensions involved in silos have been studied from a variety of angles. Some research has indicated that the fragmentation of budgets and personnel, typical in siloed organizations, might give rise to fierce rivalries between teams, with struggles for authority and influence (de Waal et al., 2019; Stone, 2004). This tension can lead to team identity issues (Cilliers & Greyvenstein, 2012), hurdles in distributing technical and tacit knowledge (Juani & Nicholas, 2006), or strong territorial feelings (Brown et al., 2005). In this hostile atmosphere, departments become organizations within organizations (Diamond & Allcorn, 2003; Diamond et al., 2004), substantiating the view of organizations as polities, meaning "associations of groups with evolving interests and resources that operate within the constraints and opportunities afforded by a formal organizational system" (Weber & Waeger, 2017: 886).

With the difficulties impeding cross-departmental collaboration, the integration challenge in sustainability implementation is underscored in highly siloed organizations (de Waal et al., 2019; Kunz, Kastelle, & Moran, 2017; Sullivan, 2018; Tett, Nauman, & Temple-West, 2019). For example, members of each siloed department might attempt to negotiate the maintenance and expansion of their own projects and resources. This occurs within the clear boundaries created by rigid organizational structures. Consequently, departments pay little attention to other implementations, such as sustainability (cf. Weber & Waeger, 2017).

In sum, we propose to approach the integration issue with a focus on organizational silos, as such a focus steers our attention not only to the firm boundaries between departments but also to the political aspects that hinder further sustainability implementation. Conversely, sustainability implementation studies have typically addressed only the competing social, environmental, and economic goals. In doing so, they have sidelined possible essential elements involved in organizations with high differentiation between functions and the consequent difficulties in reaching cross-departmental collaboration. Accordingly, we ask: *How do organizational silos impact sustainability implementation?*

4.2 Methods

Given our study's exploratory nature, we opted for qualitative methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), specifically focusing on ethnographic approaches that could allow us to capture the extraordinary in ordinary organizational life (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Initially, we were interested in understanding how Globalcar was implementing its sustainability initiatives. However, upon observing how the company's everyday sustainability initiatives were marginalized, we shifted our research to investigate the various factors that were preventing implementation. We first outline the research setting and then discuss our data collection and analysis.

Sustainability and silos at Globalcar

Our study's setting is the sustainability department at Globalcar, a subsidiary of a highly successful, multinational car manufacturer that has been a fixture in a Latin American country for decades. As an advanced industrial organization, the company has multiple departments and factories across the country and employs thousands of workers. Since 2008, sustainability has been an official core value of Globalcar's strategy. Its relevance in the company's discourse and actions increased over time, specifically after the global car industry was shaken in 2015 by Volkswagen's emissions scandal ("Dieselgate"). Suddenly, sustainability was elevated to a leadership priority, championed by Globalcar's president and other high-ranking management executives. This prominence is reflected in the global strategy (2018-2023) aimed at building "a profitable and sustainable company". In keeping with this strategy, a dedicated sustainability department was established in 2015 under the office of the Vice-President of Human Resources in order to develop a unified sustainability approach. Before its creation, sustainability initiatives were incentivized, but each team developed its own projects that reflected mainly reactions to external pressures rather than an integrated, long-term strategy.

The sustainability department is composed of a manager and two analysts. To facilitate the coordination of sustainability integrations, Robert, the sustainability manager, is also responsible for two other sub-departments: Organization Design and the Debureaucratization Office (responsible for most "silo-busting" initiatives). Thus, sustainability is embedded in a larger team of 20 employees. The department has two principal missions: (1) to coordinate the different activities so far conducted in isolation by other teams and (2) to create new social and environment-related projects to promote sustainability to internal and external stakeholders.

Among their first tasks, back in 2015, was to map the different sustainability initiatives already carried out and to structure fundamental sustainability activities, such as an annual report and a stakeholder matrix. Table 1 outlines this initial mapping of activities across departments. Complementing this data with information we collected at Globalcar.

Table 1 - Main sustainability projects and responsible departments.

Activity/Project	Description	Department
Environmental certification (ISO)	Monitoring and improvement of environmental impact in the production processes	Environmental engineering
Recycling of scraps	Correct destination of scrap parts from the production lines	Production lines
Private pension scheme	Provide a private pension scheme to employees	Human Resources
Urban mobility	Improve options and accessibility of different transports	Globalcar Foundation
Social mobility	Improve conditions in communities surrounding Globalcar's factories	Globalcar Foundation
Education in the community	Improve access and quality of education in communities surrounding Globalcar's factories	Globalcar Foundation
Diversity	Practice diversity and respect in the production lines	Labor union
Well-being of employees	Several initiatives to provide a better working place for employees	Labor union
Hydroelectric	Internal hydroelectric responsible for providing clean energy in production lines	Logistics
Sustainable supply chain	Regular meetings and audits to guarantee sustainability standards in the supply chain	Purchasing
Oil recycling in dealerships	Collection and recycling of oil in after-sales activities in dealerships	After-sales
Processes and systems in dealerships	Improve relationships with dealerships with the creation of guidelines, projects and implementation of systems in the dealership network	After-sales and a similar project in Dealership relationship
Customers' app	Development of an app whereby customers can schedule services, buy parts and improve the relationship with the brand	Afters Sales, Dealership relationship and Digitization have similar projects
Volunteering among employees	Organization of volunteering activities among workers	Labor rights
Mobility in dealerships	Think of alternative business models in dealerships	Dealership relationship
Finance in dealerships	Support dealerships with financial sustainability initiatives	Dealership relationship
Corporate responsibility committee	Monthly meetings to discuss corporate responsibilities activities	Press
Annual sustainability report	Produce the annual sustainability report with the main achievements of the year	Sustainability
Education in the North of the country	Support projects with profits from a specific car in the northern parts of the country	Sustainability
Diversity	Create initiatives to promote diversity, such as women in managerial positions	Sustainability
Stakeholder Materiality matrix	Every 3 years, the organization analyzes its primary stakeholders	Sustainability
Lending cars to the local firefighter school	Partnership to lend cars to the local firefighters' school. Cars are used in trainings and then returned to the factory	Sustainability

Even with Globalcar's multiple sustainability projects, we soon discovered various obstacles to their success. Specifically, many departments—including the dealership network, the environmental engineering department and the Globalcar Foundation—turned their backs, one by one, to the newly structured sustainability team. According to our informants, some members of departments claimed they did not have the time, resources, or the will to engage in possible alignments that sustainability activities necessitate. The lack of cross-departmental collaboration and cooperation became obvious in daily activities, such as the difficulties in sharing resources, coordinating information, scheduling meetings, or even dialoguing with different, and often distant, parts of the organization.

A frequent explanation that was given for this communication chasm and thus marginalization of sustainability initiatives, was the presence of silos between departments. Our informants, however, could not develop further how those silos were impacting sustainability implementation. Witnessing the impact of this unproductive situation, we were spurred to conduct deeper investigation.

Data collection

Comprising our ethnographic data are observations (Van Maanen, 2011) and in-depth semi-structured interviews (Longhurst, 2009) undertaken in 2018. This collected material is complemented with the company's reports and internal newsletters.

Ethnographic observation. To gain access to Globalcar and its employees, we sent an explanatory letter to the Vice-President of Human Resources (VPHR). Upon approval, the lead researcher was installed in Globalcar's sustainability department. A considerable volume of data was amassed, including 480 hours of observation over four months. Daily accounts were written chronologically and organized in a 200-page Word document.

During the fieldwork, the lead researcher had weekly meetings with the sustainability manager. These meetings proved to be extremely beneficial to the research, as it was possible to address specific dimensions that were being observed. For instance, the researcher closely observed the implementation of silo-busting initiatives, many of which were the responsibility of the sustainability manager. In one of the meetings, the manager explained such initiatives, detailing why they were created, their specific steps and outcomes. Additionally, the researcher could double-check information he received from other sustainability analysts, such as the department's history, the reasons behind the lack of a structured sustainability strategy, and next steps. The lead researcher also participated in weekly staff meetings in which each member of the team described the highlights of the week and the manager shared strategic information about the organization.

Finally, a strength of our data collection process was the researcher's access to senior-level management, resulting in 17 meetings that were attended in various departments, including Human Resources, Sales & Marketing, Finance, and IT. The strategic and macro-perspective acquired with the researcher's interactions with managers at Globalcar were enriched by conversations at informal gatherings, such as coffee breaks, birthday parties, and corridor talks. These interactions revealed valuable anecdotes and information about relationships among colleagues. Such details would have been difficult to elicit and map if limited to a formal interview situation. When notes could not be taken immediately, the lead researcher typed key words on his phone, creating jotting notes (Emerson et al., 1996) that were later fleshed out on his computer.

In-depth semi-structured interviews. A total of 73 interviews were conducted with employees representing 26 departments and a range of tenures and positions in the organization. The aim was to understand how sustainability initiatives were implemented across departments, the type of coordination that was necessary, and the challenges that arose along the way. As a first step, we decided to interview the 20 employees from the macro department of Sustainability, the Debureaucratization Office, and Organization Design. In order to secure participants, we used the snowball sampling technique, asking employees to suggest the names of Globalcar peers who could enhance our research during these interviews (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Aiming to gather views from as many diverse parts of the organization as possible, we then interviewed other employees and managers. The final interviews were not providing any significant new information that could alter our initial understanding of the problems and possible explanations we were formulating (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Consequently, we felt confident enough to stop interviewing by this point.

A semi-structured interview protocol was produced, covering an array of issues related to silos, boundaries between departments and sustainability. We were interested in getting a general view of the organization, opinions on silos, and the extent of knowledge pertaining to sustainability activities at Globalcar. An additional block of questions was added for interviewees who worked directly or indirectly with sustainability. These questions were related to how sustainability projects evolved over time, and whether their intended outcomes were reached. Most of the interviews were recorded using the lead researcher's cell phone after the interviewees' verbal approval. Interviews ranged from 20 to 120 minutes.

Documents. Three main types of written materials were collected: daily intranet news pertaining to sustainability activities, sustainability reports, and specific presentations that the sustainability team prepared to present their projects. More than 1600 pages were collected. These documents were essential in order for the researchers to construct a timeline of the sustainability department's activities. These documents were also complementary to the observations and interviews, guaranteeing a holistic view of Globalcar's sustainability activities and results.

Data analysis

We used an open-ended and inductive approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), following the steps of Gioia's methodology (Gioia et al., 2013). After several rounds of iteration with colleagues, conference presentations, and internal discussions, we concluded that the number of dimensions we were dealing with warranted a more structured methodology, such as Gioia's, to enhance our analytical focus. For clarity, our approach is summarized in six steps.

First, our analysis started during our fieldwork when the lead researcher began writing fieldnotes with additional comments, perceptions, questions, and feelings (Yanow et al., 2012). Weekly meetings with the other authors were essential in order to discuss emerging topics, and counterbalance possible biases from the ethnographer's immersion in the field. These other individuals acted as "devil's advocates", questioning relationships and conclusions as outsiders (cf. Geiger et al., 2020). Realizing the difficulties of implementing sustainability at Globalcar, we rapidly shifted our research focus to exploring how silos impact sustainability implementation across organizational departments and functions. Our initial hunches were clustered into (a) sustainability initiatives, (b) problems that silos caused in sustainability implementation, and (c) responses to such problems.

Second, we used NVivo as a data repository and a coding tool. We triangulated our sources with our field notes, interviews, and documents. Our initial coding resulted in more than 130 nodes. In terms of sustainability initiatives, we developed a list that was later developed into "Table 1". This approach helped us not only to understand possible connections between sustainability and the rest of the organization, but also to consolidate detailed accounts about the challenges confronted by the sustainability team when trying to establish initiatives. Our analysis of the problems exposed explicitly the diverse facets of the silos. Many of our informants shared their opinions quite openly on why sustainability initiatives were often downgraded in the organization. Likewise, in terms of responses, many silo-busting initiatives were attributed to attempts to integrate sustainability across organizational departments, even though our observations and informants were indicating that such solutions also presented problems. We reorganized our codes, clustering similar ones until we reached a more manageable number of 1st order concepts.

Third, in our weekly discussions, we further organized our ideas several times in an effort to reach coherent 2nd order themes and determine possible theoretical connections between them. For example, we knew that previous studies on silos had pointed to territoriality as a key problem (Brown et al., 2005; Cilliers & Greyvenstein, 2012). This knowledge led us to structure the theme "territoriality". Additionally, we realized that silos were creating a disconnection between sustainability projects and their goals. This inconsistency resonated with the idea of goal displacement (Bohte & Meier, 2000; Warner & Havens, 1968). Hence, we developed goal displacement as another 2nd order theme.

We summarized the salient problems derived from our data under what we label *silofication*. We opted to develop a new terminology for this phenomenon to emphasize its processual characteristics. Silofication, in our view, is ongoing, shaping and being shaped by daily interactions between organizational members, in a self-reinforcing process of silos leading to silos. With the concept of silofication, we could understand why the sustainability team was struggling in their implementation efforts. We also realized that such problems from silos were motivating both responses to change the organization and to maintain it "as is".

Fourth, despite a clear understanding of the issues triggering boundary work and attempts at dissolving and maintaining boundaries, we could not explain exactly how silofication was affecting sustainability implementation. In other words, we needed to grasp the *dynamics* between dissolving and upholding boundaries that culminated in the prevalence of the former, thus preventing sustainability from being integrated into core managerial functions. To deepen our understanding, we zoomed into the silo-busting initiatives to analyze, why they were not making much progress in creating more porous inter-departmental boundaries. We compiled a list of such initiatives from our data with examples and our analysis of their problems (Table 2).

By comparing initiatives and their problems, we could see patterns that were analytically developed as additional 1st order concepts. They were clustered into three mechanisms that explain the prevalence of defensive responses, even with the proliferation of contesting initiatives: *enacting survival instinct*, *waiting for momentum* and *fading out*. Job rotation, for instance, was an initiative created to address the territoriality of departments, yet it failed because it did not consider the political and competitive environment at Globalcar. In their new roles, managers, lacking experience in their functions, become defensive instead of collaborative. This behavior illustrates the mechanism of "enacting survival instinct", as managers are caught in the silofication process when forced to deal with new challenges.

As a fifth step, we iterated with theory to conceptualize our final themes and their relationships. We used studies on silos (Cilliers & Greyvenstein, 2012), boundaries (Langley et al., 2019) and sustainability implementation (Hengst et al., 2020) to make sense of our themes. The breakthrough came when we recognized that silofication is related to the boundaries between working teams in their daily activities (Diamond & Allcorn, 2004; Diamond et al., 2004), whereas sustainability implementation at Globalcar highlights the problems of the acute paucity of collaboration between departments.

Table 2 - Silo-busting initiatives at Globalcar, problems, and mechanisms that explain their failure

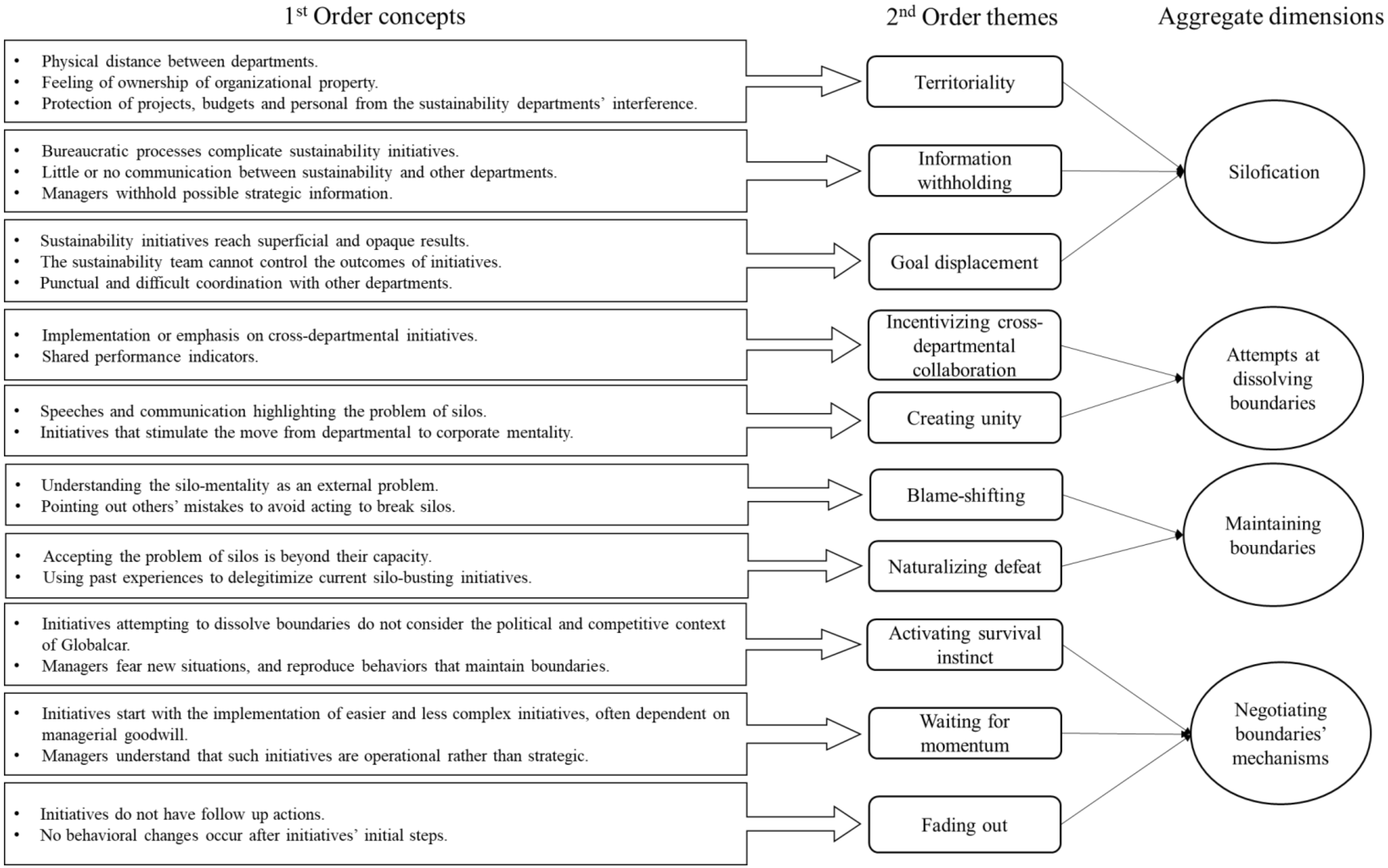
Initiative	Description and intention	Example	Central problems in the example	Mechanisms that explain initiative's failure
Job rotation	Managers ideally change jobs after 3 years (but may remain up to 5 years). This initiative would eliminate the "territoriality" feeling that comes when someone stays for too long as an "owner" of a specific department.	The previous sustainability manager hired an external consultancy to produce a report and structure the sustainability strategy at Globalcar. He then rotated to another position, leaving the task of implementing such a strategy to the new manager.	The new manager decided not to use any material prepared by his predecessor, aiming to be recognized for his own actions.	Enacting survival instinct
Debureaucratization Office	A group of professionals with different previous experiences within the organization joined a boundary-spanning department created to help other parts of the organization "debureaucratize" their processes. Fewer steps in a process mean that others can grasp it more easily. Their mantra is that 'processes have to become stronger than the view of departments'.	There was an open call for initiatives that are currently bureaucratic in the organization. Meanwhile, the responsible team organized workshops with vice-presidencies to map and improve processes.	Regarding the initiatives, they decided to start with easy tasks and processes to create some momentum, leaving the bulk of bureaucratic steps untouched. Regarding the workshops, the team could not follow up on initiatives once participants return to their departments.	Waiting for momentum Fading out
Cross-functional projects	Specific working groups are created to try a new organization design model. Employees are seconded from their departments and the initiatives are coordinated by external and "neutral" consultancies. The project is usually a few months long.	For the sustainability report, a cross-departmental team was created, uniting different parts of the organization around a sole initiative. Departments were soon reluctant to let their employees participate in meetings that were non-related to their direct activities.	Employees who participate in these initiatives are used as "spies" by managers who ask for strategic information discussed in the project. Departments are still paying for these employees' salaries, which generates some conflict of roles, tasks and expectations (my employee is not working for me, but I'm still paying her/him).	Enacting survival instinct

Beyond our horizon	Managerial shadowing. Top managers would spend a day following another manager, who would show their daily activities' main problems.	The sustainability manager shadowed another manager and could observe their daily problems.	After returning to his department, he could understand some of the difficulties that others live. However, no change in behavior was perceived, as there were no further actions, as managers complained about the "wasted time" in other departments.	Fading out
Training walk the talk	Managerial training to stimulate employees to create consistency between their discourse and practice; to apply projects that they have been discussing for a while, but never got the chance to implement; to exchange ideas with other managers.	The organizational design manager participated in one of the first training sessions and committed to implement a project to help connect their discourses and practices or break the silos.	The first meetings happened, and each manager had to develop a "to do" list from the course. Next steps would be informed later, but nothing happened, so far. The manager committed to learning some new software, a very mundane initiative that has nothing to do with "walking the talk" or breaking the silos.	Fading out Waiting for momentum
Shared objectives	Each manager has specific objectives in their career and development plans. The idea is that broader targets that departments create are also the responsibility of other departments.	The diversity indicator is a shared commitment between many departments involved in selection and recruitment.	Despite the initiative, managers' transparency is still dependant on goodwill on disclosing their targets and sharing information with others. Surprisingly, managers are using this initiative for self-promotion, especially because the indicator is low, and targets are easy to be reached.	Waiting for momentum Enacting survival instinct
Reorganization of HR processes	The sustainability team would coordinate and align activities to change 26 core HR processes, according to HQ standards.	The sustainability team had to organize several meetings with managers from other departments to align the indicators and processes.	The initiative is still dependent on the goodwill from other departments, which does not happen frequently. Many do not participate in the meetings, and the bulk of operational activities remain in sustainability analysts' hands.	Waiting for momentum

Therefore, we decided to use the boundary literature terminology that helped us synthesize Globalcar's difficulties in implementing sustainability across departments in a siloed organization. This approach also facilitated the development of four aggregate dimensions: silofication, maintaining boundaries, dissolving boundaries and negotiating boundaries' mechanisms. Figure 1 presents our concepts, themes, and dimensions. It outlines our approach from initial inductive concepts to more theoretical aggregate dimensions.

Sixth, in presenting our findings, we organized the relationships between our analytical elements, a basic step in the Gioia methodology (Gioia et al., 2013). After several weekly meetings and attempts, we agreed on a picture that accurately portrayed our case and reflected our theoretical insights. In writing up our account, we merged our ethnographic and interview accounts, developing five "composite narratives" (Jarzabkowski, Bednarek, & Lê, 2014) in the form of vignettes around specific sustainability initiatives that could reflect our data's emic power (cf. Lok & De Rond, 2013). Our decision to concentrate on *initiatives* arose from the complexity of separating groups of boundary challengers and incumbents, as even managers who were incentivizing change also showed some signs of resistance. Furthermore, the focus on initiatives allowed us to demonstrate how individuals understand, appropriate, and use them in different ways. This approach also dynamically captured the scenario at Globalcar and reflected the specificities of many of the company's sustainability projects.

Figure 1 - Concepts, themes and dimensions.



4.3 Findings

Our findings explore how Globalcar's silos constitute stumbling blocks to sustainability implementation across organizational departments. First, we trace the existence of organizational silos and the pervasive process of silofication that becomes problematic to sustainability implementation. Second, we explain the silo-busting initiatives. Third, we show why the lack of integration persists. Our analysis uncovers the different mechanisms involved in negotiating boundaries and identifies attempts at maintaining the status quo, which gradually undermine silo-busting projects and keep sustainability marginalized. Finally, we consolidate our findings in a process model of silofication and the failure of sustainability implementation.

To untangle our story, we begin by exploring the various pitfalls of silofication that prompted efforts to dissolve boundaries at Globalcar through several "silo-busting" initiatives. In the remainder of our analysis, we explore five vignettes, later complemented with examples from our coding structure (Table 3).

Table 3 - Examples from data.

Illustrative examples from data	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
-Departments occupy different floors and buildings, often isolated, and need a car to be reached for meetings. -Managers see themselves as the owners of departments, budgets, and personnel. -Conversations that the sustainability team had with other departments, in which they refused collaboration by arguing, “this is my project, this is my team”.	Territoriality	
-Other departments withhold information from the sustainability team, especially when there is no previous alignment in the materiality matrix or the annual report. - The sustainability team has limited communication with other parts of the company, making it hard to follow projects’ progress, such as the CC indicator. -Robert does not inform his superior about possible problems he has.	Information withholding	Silofication
-Sustainability does not know how to reach the results of initiatives such as the Project Supervise and corporate citizenship indicator. -Sustainability initiatives are simplified to show fast and opaque results, such as the sustainability report and workshops from the Debureaucratization Office. -Punctual and difficult coordination of CSR committee.	Goal displacement	
-The arrangement of hackathons, in which employees from many departments spend a couple of days developing solutions to the organization’s problems. -Workshops from the Debureaucratization Office. -Shared indicators between managers, which demand collaboration to reach a common goal.	Incentivizing cross-departmental collaboration	Dissolving boundaries
-Speeches from managers in communications and events, emphasizing the need to break departmental walls. -Robert organizes visits to other departments and takes his team to understand how others work, creating proximity between teams. -Managerial job rotation to reduce territoriality.	Creating unity	
-Robert argues that the manager who replaced him in his previous department is reinforcing silos by not collaborating with others, but he did the same when he became the sustainability manager and canceled his predecessors’ work, or when he does not accept criticisms from customers in the materiality matrix. -Robert blames the silos as a national culture trait. -Managers frequently find problems in colleagues’ work, so that the attention shifts to the other and justifies lack of collaboration.	Blame-shifting	Maintaining boundaries
-The sustainability team often feels that silos are beyond their capabilities, and there is nothing they can do to change the organization. -Fausto argues that the company will not change because external consultancies tried before and could not. -Employees consider some initiatives too simplistic and not enough to change the organization, reinforcing organizational unwillingness or even incapacity.	Naturalizing defeat	

Silofication and its problems to sustainability implementation

At Globalcar, departments are accustomed to working fairly autonomously with clear differentiation and segregation between them. This functional differentiation was helpful when specific processes and production platforms were developed around each car model produced by the company. Administrative departments also benefited from operational independence, as most decisions were made at the intra-departmental level, saving time and money. Even so, over time, functional differentiation fostered a political atmosphere and competitiveness between departments. These developments led to what respondents described as silos. The efforts to implement sustainability initiatives brought to light the growing challenges of coordination across departments. We noted the process through which silos were maintained and reinforced, which we term silofication. We use this term to express the ongoing lack of collaboration and knowledge exchange between working teams.

In our analysis, silofication became especially evident with the sustainability department's inability to guarantee cross-departmental collaboration and implement its initiatives. One of the first tasks of the sustainability team members was to map activities. They discovered many overlaps and duplications of similar initiatives, yet the lack of coordination hampered the effectiveness of such initiatives. For instance, reducing 30% of CO2 emissions in production lines until 2025 is one of their main strategic projects regarding environmental impacts. Such an enormous undertaking would necessitate collaboration between several functional teams, such as car design, car materials, supply-chain relationships, procurement, stamping, and different production processes to reach the desired scale and scope. However, although some departments had already taken steps to mitigate their environmental impacts, the sustainability team could not integrate their efforts across all departments.

We found that there are two main manifestations of silofication at Globalcar that hinder the implementation of sustainability initiatives: territoriality and information withholding. As a result, there is goal displacement, evincing the distance between Globalcar's intentions regarding sustainability and the reality of daily implementation. Vignettes 1 and 2, developed from the ethnographer's field notes, provide representative examples from the vast corpus of data in which they are embedded.

Vignette 1 – The firefighter training project. Each year, approximately 200 cars are used in safety tests at Globalcar. After the tests, the vehicles are discarded. Firefighters need to understand the car's many parts and mechanics so that they can act confidently in the event of an accident. Realizing the opportunity to collaborate on social dimensions of sustainability, and at the same time reuse cars that would be scrapped anyway, the sustainability team created a project involving the lending of those cars to the firefighters for their training program before the cars are discarded. Each car can be used in the training of 30 firefighters. After the training, what is left of them is returned to the factory where they are scrapped.

Luke, a sustainability analyst, is responsible for organizing the logistics of bringing the cars from the factory to the firefighters and back. Given the number of ongoing initiatives that I was introduced to during my first weeks at Globalcar, I felt that this sustainability project should be deemed a minor one compared to others. I realize that Luke faces unpredictable daily problems, as he needs to align the logistics with many departments (e.g. engineering; testing team; logistics; property protection) that are not always cooperative. Also, he sits next to me, and I observe him filling out several forms for each stage of the process. I also see that he accompanies the cars' delivery and return, following all the compliance procedures. Some weeks, I barely see him because he is out trying to solve unexpected problems.

One day, Luke and I are talking when Robert, the sustainability manager, arrives at the department. In an agitated state, he summons Luke to his office. As Luke enters Robert's office and closes the door behind him, he looks at me apprehensively. Then I hear Robert yelling, "I thought I was very clear about making sure the cars are covered! God, this is such a simple task and I can't trust you even for that! This will not happen again, or I'll cancel the whole project!" Robert had promised the public relations manager that the destroyed cars, when returned, would be covered to conceal them from bystanders on the street. However, Luke had gotten so caught up in the laborious process of coordinating the logistics with other departments that he forgot to verify whether the cars were covered. Unfortunately, this time, they were not. A few minutes later, an embarrassed Luke leaves the office, and mutters to Sara (a sustainability analyst) and me:

> *This was unnecessary. I already have a lot of difficulties guaranteeing we get the cars. Other departments are lying, not willing to help, and then a minor mistake I make in the rush of the moment, and he just ignores everything I do and cares only about his interests. Just because he promised the public relations manager that he would not let the destroyed cars be within plain view.*

Luke struggled for months to understand the many bureaucratic steps involved in the logistical process. He often experiences complications with specific uncooperative and physically distant departments. This situation complicates his task. Another day, Luke appears to be stressed after a call. He unburdens himself to me:

> *So, my friend who usually helps me get the cars from the testing cars department is on vacation, so then I decided to talk to his manager. I explained the situation, and he told me in a dry tone: "No, we don't have any cars, I'm sorry. But right after the call, I sent my contact a message, and he told me quite the opposite, that there were at least five cars available for sure.*

Luke tries talking to his friend's manager again, but he is still unwilling to disclose the number of available cars. Luke has no choice but to escalate the matter to Robert. After a formal meeting with Robert and the other manager, Luke can secure two cars for the firefighters this month, which is still a much smaller number than what he had initially been promised.

Vignette 2 – The Corporate Citizenship Indicator. It is a quiet day in the office when a cheerful Luke (sustainability analyst) turns his chair towards Sara and me and says: "We got 7.7 for the Corporate Citizenship Indicator this year!" Sara replies, "Thank God! Every year, we have to light up some candles and pray for a good mark, as we have zero control over this." They both laugh. Later that day, in his weekly meetings with the rest of the team and us, Robert (the sustainability manager) congratulates both of them for the positive results, but he adds: "Even though we have no idea how and why we improved." They all laugh again.

The Corporate Citizenship Indicator is part of a monthly customer satisfaction survey at Globalcar. One of the questions is related to the public's perception of the company as being socially responsible. The sustainability department is expected to monitor this *key performance indicator* (KPI) and is held accountable for it. To improve the results, the department needs to find innovative solutions. Aware of the arduous work involved in managing this indicator, Robert and his team try to, at least, think of possible connections between other departments' projects and customers' perceptions. They feel that there is still not much they can do, as departments conduct their projects without any interference from the sustainability department—and sometimes even without its awareness. Simultaneously, Robert feels that he cannot simply confess to Jennifer (VPHR) that he has no idea how to improve the indicator. The other day, in one of our weekly conversations, he admitted: "Nobody wants to hear problems. We want solutions. So I try not to bother Jennifer with these daily situations. I try to solve them internally, with our team." Nonetheless, in this case, the solution seems to be to continue monitoring the indicator, protecting others from noticing any possible ambiguity.

Vignettes 1 and 2 illustrate silofication manifested in rivalries between departments. In Vignette 1, Robert is worried about his commitment to another manager, suggesting the central role of relationships at the organization. Their importance is corroborated when Luke verifies information by consulting his contacts. Furthermore, when the manager of the testing car department refuses to cooperate, Luke's need to escalate the problem to Robert also suggests a layer of organizational politics. This dimension is underscored in Vignette 2 with Robert's avoidance of bringing problems to Jennifer, his superior.

Our analysis indicates that in a siloed organization, the competition between departments evolves over time and is reinforced by a silofication process. This process causes the relationship between sustainability and other departments to deteriorate. It is manifested in two major forms: *territoriality* and *information withholding.* As a consequence, silofication leads to *goal displacement.*

Territoriality – Managers within a silofication process aim to protect their resources and projects from external interference, specifically the involvement of other departments. This need to defend the department overrides any thought of the organization's best interests. Even though the members of the sustainability team were responsible for aligning sustainability initiatives across departments (Table 2), they frequently found that managers from other departments were uncooperative. To illustrate, as a sustainability analyst, Sara often felt frustrated because the managers avoided her attempts to engage in dialogue, claiming that those were "their projects, or their teams", even though they were all part of the same company.

We found that this feeling of ownership over initiatives can be attributed to the allocation of resources, personnel, and budgets to specific departments. The distribution of funds and people gives their respective heads significant autonomy. In Vignette 1, since the cars are not owned by the testing car department, it is easier for the department's manager to ignore requests from a low-ranking analyst from another remote part of the factory. We also observed that territoriality is reinforced by physical distance, as each department occupies a floor or a building at Globalcar, often quite isolated from other departments and with little or no daily contact with the rest of the organization. This situation generates a feeling of multiple separate subsidiaries under the umbrella of one huge corporation.

In the face of such blatant territoriality, Luke, despite his genuine efforts, cannot penetrate the silos' walls. To circumvent them, he is compelled to escalate his requests to management or to colleagues with whom he has a closer relationship. The territoriality obstacle complicates the monitoring of the corporate citizenship indicator, in Vignette 2, as Robert and his team cannot influence Globalcar's foundation activities. Consequently, they must merely "pray for good results".

Information withholding – Another manifestation of silofication is information withholding. As our data indicate, it is unclear to our informants what happens in other parts of the organization, and processes that the sustainability team has among its tasks are usually overly bureaucratic. As departments drift further apart, their internal processes might gradually over time. Also, since departments vie for resources, managers are incentivized to withhold information from others or to be more political in their relationships. In Vignette 1, for instance, other departments are unwilling to disclose the exact number of available cars to the sustainability team. It is not clear why the testing car manager is refusing to help. Given the relatively minor scale and significance of the initiative, the testing car manager's willingness to risk antagonizing other parts of the organization seems more laborious than collaborative. Even if there might be no ulterior motive behind the manager's lack of cooperation, it is easy to speculate about parallel obscure agendas, interests, or ideas in such an environment, as Luke and Sara pointed out repeatedly in our interactions.

Vignette 2 also highlights information withholding, as Robert is unaware of what other parts of the organization are doing and how such activities could affect the indicator's monitoring. He reinforces this negative aspect when admitting he would rather withhold information about the daily problems that he faces instead of sharing them with other parts of the organization or even with his superiors.

Goal displacement **–** Due to silofication and its manifestations, there is a disconnection between sustainability initiatives and their expected results, for it is impossible to predict how projects will unfold in different parts of the organization. For example, in Vignette 1, the number of cars lent to the aforementioned firefighters' project is a challenge, as the absence of collaboration makes it difficult to formulate any informed predictions. In Vignette 2, the sustainability team even jokes about the frustration over the control of results in the Corporate Citizenship Indicator.

A sign of such difficulty is the gradual simplification of projects and expectations from them. It can be argued that this simplification is an attempt to minimize the dependency on other departments within the organization. In Vignette 2, the goal, in theory, continues to be the improvement of customers' perceptions of Globalcar's sustainability. In practice, however, the only goal that Robert and his team have is to monitor the indicator, as they are limited in their actions that require the participation of other departments of the organization.

Another illustration of this strategy is the simplification of the sustainability report and the materiality matrix (Table 2). Initially, these tools were intended to be used for integration. It was hoped that they would promote significant cross-departmental collaboration, i.e., the sustainability team would need to coordinate initiatives with other departments. On the contrary, according to Robert, the primary objective has been reduced to merely finishing the projects every year, in the case of the report, and every three years, in the case of the materiality matrix. This basic, unambitious aim resulted from the realization that they had no control over other possible results of sustainability initiatives.

Attempts at dissolving boundaries through silo-busting initiatives

When considered together, silofication and its goal displacement suggest that the marginalization of sustainability is embedded in a broader and pervasive organizational phenomenon. The problems that silofication brought to sustainability initiatives revealed to Globalcar the serious issues engendered by silos. As Jennifer (VPHR), one of the organization's most influential executives, comments on the moment she realized how problematic silos had become in daily activities: “We were in a board meeting, and production KPIs were fine, sales KPIs were fine, but we were still losing money… Then we realized we were not discussing our business anymore, only different parts [of the company].”

The adverse sides of silofication thus motivated the development of what Globalcar labelled “silo-busting” projects. In our analysis, we categorize these projects as *attempts at dissolving boundaries*. This effort consists of *incentivizing cross-departmental collaboration* and *creating unity*. The overarching aim here is to shift from a departmental structure to a unified organizational perspective.

Many of these new projects to promote a “cultural transformation” and chip away at the silos and the silofication process are also Robert’s responsibility as the person in charge of sustainability. Both the Globalcar CEO and Jennifer understood that many sustainability projects are connected to the broader idea of increased alignment between departments. After all, the production of a sustainability report and a stakeholder matrix should stimulate cross-departmental collaboration and produce a holistic view of the organization. Therefore, they decided to create a sub-department called the “Debureaucratization Office”. Its stated mission is to develop silo-busting initiatives to improve transparency, make processes more agile and promote cross-departmental interactions. Six senior analysts from different parts of the organization were recruited for this new department to provide a more holistic view of the company and to secure the collaboration of their previous departments. By the time the fieldwork began, expansion of the Debureaucratization Office was already underway. Robert was in the process of hiring two additional employees. Vignette 3 describes a “Debureaucratization Office” workshop that the ethnographer attended. It offers a glimpse into the approach adopted by Globalcar.

Vignette 3 – The synergy workshop. Robert (sustainability manager) invited me as a guest to one of the synergy workshops his team had organized. I am impressed by the 30 senior managers from different parts of the company. They blocked off their full working day to attend the event. “Today, we’re divided into silos. I do my part and don’t know about the rest” starts Joseph, (VP, Operations). After him, Robert explains the event’s primary purposes: to generate empathy, level knowledge, promote transparency, and nurture the feeling of one team. Following the introductions and a brief explanation of the event, participants are divided into four groups. Each of them occupies one corner of the room, where an employee from Robert’s team is waiting with a whiteboard. I join Arthur’s (sustainability analyst) group, as he explains: “We first need to map the different steps involved in the conceptualization of a new car.” I observe that participants are engaged in the task, and they rapidly finish this initial analysis. They then move on to find possible synergies and overlaps between steps. As a result, a list of possible actions is created, with a cost-benefit analysis based on the difficulty level and expected time savings. Meanwhile, an excited Robert explains to me how they are revolutionizing the overall production of a car, as many unnecessary steps, which were intra-departmentally created over time, are now being re-assessed in the workshop.

By the end of the event, the atmosphere is generally positive. Managers return to their departments, and Robert’s team organizes the workshop’s main outputs. Two weeks later, however, Arthur is worried about the follow-up actions, as he confesses to me: “I still have to talk to Robert about monitoring the suggestions we made in our last workshop. It’s not clear how we can guarantee that they’ll really implement the changes.” Even though the VP of Operations was the one who approached them, once the event was over, they cannot confirm whether the agreed actions are being followed. Managers go back to their routines, many times becoming unavailable. I notice then that the optimistic feeling of change that I felt during the workshop is hastily replaced by the familiar sentiments of suspicion and isolation. Arthur concludes that there is nothing they can do at this point. Ironically, the silos prevent him from breaking the silos.

Incentivizing cross-departmental collaboration – The workshop described in Vignette 3 exemplifies a silo-busting initiative developed to create synergies between departments. Such cross-departmental projects can present a finite or perennial timeline, according to their objectives and development. Vignette 3 represents the first case, as the Debureaucratization Office workshops are on-demand and typically last no more than one week. Hackathons (Table 2) provide another example, as employees unite to solve organizational problems within a couple of days or reorganize processes from a specific vice-president's office. Other initiatives are of a more perennial nature, albeit typically with a narrow scope, such as shared indicators between managers, who would be obliged to work together to reach a common goal (Table 2).

Creating unity– Emerging from our analysis was another relevant set of initiatives to contest boundaries: speeches and structured initiatives that do not directly promote cross-departmental collaboration but are important to create a sense of only "one Globalcar". This is the positive image of a united company instead of a junction of independent departments. In terms of speeches, senior leadership highlights the importance of silo-busting and specific interactional moments between managers. At Globalcar, the CEO, Jennifer (VPHR), along with many other top executives, repeatedly emphasize the importance of dissolving the silos. The opening speech from the VP of Operations in Vignette 3 illustrates one of such moments. As for structured initiatives, the job rotation scheme exemplifies how the organization developed actions to create a sense of only one Globalcar. Similar projects include "Beyond Our Horizon", which involves managers shadowing each other, and the cross-departmental visits that Robert organizes to familiarize his team with the functions of other departments of the company. (Table 2).

However, even with the proliferation of silo-busting initiatives, our analysis indicates that the attempts to change consolidated boundaries at Globalcar also provoke defensive responses to maintain boundaries as they are. The final part of Vignette 3 reveals the frustrating stagnation that the sustainability team faces in conducting follow-up activities with managers.

As mentioned previously, the managers usually return to their departments after the workshops and remain inaccessible. Even Robert, one of the most vocal opponents of the silos, attempts to hide any problems from the rest of the organization, as evidenced in Vignette 2.

Negotiating boundaries and the prevalence of defensive mechanisms

In the final part of our analysis, we argue that the adverse aspects of silofication serve as an impetus for not only boundary-dissolving initiatives, but also, paradoxically, a defensive response to uphold boundaries through *blame-shifting* and *naturalizing defeat*. These concomitant attempts interact in a process that we label *negotiating boundaries*. In this process, the several silo-busting initiatives developed by the organization do not culminate in the integration of sustainability initiatives across organizational departments and functions. On the contrary, they trigger defensive mechanisms that lead to the reinforcement of silos. In this section, our aim is to explore the dynamics involved in this process of negotiating boundaries. First, we explain the characteristics of attempts to defend boundaries and later identify specific mechanisms that explain how these attempts are gradually weakened by efforts to keep the walls intact—to the point where silo-busting initiatives have negligible impact on the integration of sustainability.

Vignette 4 illustrates the nuances involved in maintaining boundaries. It explains how different departments at Globalcar dealt with the realization that they were conducting similar and thus overlapping projects.

Vignette 4 – The app. Customers are a key stakeholder group for Globalcar, and the sustainability team mapped the many initiatives spread within the organization that could contribute to an overall improvement in their perceptions. This is when a peculiar situation occurred. Robert (sustainability manager) and his team identified three remarkably similar projects conducted in three separate departments. The projects consisted of creating an app to improve customers' experience. Its main features are the possibility of scheduling services directly with the dealerships of their choice, ordering, price simulations and inputting useful information for subsequent customer relationship management processes. The problem is that Darien (dealership relationships manager), Thomas (aftersales manager) and Natasha (digitization manager) started these projects independently, resulting in three completely different and non-communicable apps for the same customers.

The new VP of Marketing and Sales schedules a meeting with all the managers in his department to hear their prepared presentations regarding their current and future projects. During these presentations, the similarities of the projects are exposed. It is debatable whether the three managers knew that the others were working on similar projects prior to this meeting. Nonetheless, once Darien, Thomas and Natasha find out about each other's intentions, they need to find a solution, particularly in an environment where silos are becoming increasingly problematic. In my conversations with Darien, she argues that she should be the project owner, as she was the one who initiated the project. Thomas disagrees. He claims that such an app's core functionality is for customers to schedule services and, therefore, his department should be in charge of it. As the head of the recently created digitization department, Natasha is firmly convinced that she should be the one responsible for the initiative. After attending meetings with all three of them, I conclude that they are mesmerized by the alluring strategic project that will bring a steady flow of resources to their departments. Digitization is a "hot topic" at the moment, always present in meetings or even corridor talks. In this scenario, any possibility of sharing responsibilities in a cross-departmental initiative is disregarded.

Instead of working together to create the best possible app, the three managers seek to make *their* separate projects the official app initiative, without collaboration with other departments. They rush to meet with their software developers to speed up the final version of the app. One day, Darien tells me that she uses her other projects to leverage the idea among dealerships that her department is about to release an app. I have seen Natasha scheduling meetings and lunches with vice-presidents, and Tobias (digitization supervisor), who work with her, confesses that Natasha brings up the situation casually at such events. When the three are together, they are eager to find several unresolvable problems in each other's apps, pointing out how superior their own solutions are. The sustainability team, already puzzled by the multiple initiatives, does not have much choice but to watch the whole situation unfold. Eventually, they conclude that this is a problem way beyond their capacity.

This vignette illustrates that realizing the pitfalls of silofication not only galvanizes attempts to dissolve boundaries at Globalcar, but also spurs efforts to preserve the status quo. This defensive response can take two forms: blame-shifting and naturalizing defeat.

Blame-shifting – The transference of blame occurs when managers acknowledge the marginalization of sustainability caused by the downsides of silofication but blame other departments of the organization, or even external factors (e.g. national culture, customers, headquarters), for such problems. A blame-shifting discourse precedes and justifies inaction and even the continuation of silofication behaviors, as the focus of attention turns to others. In Vignette 4, for example, different departments blame each other for problems in the development of a specific app, thus rationalizing the lack of collaboration with other parts of the organization. Shifting the blame to others allows managers to justify their isolated initiatives. Another example comes from Robert, who believes that silos form because of the country's culture that values the individual over collective gains (Table 2). Also, as the sustainability manager, Robert does not usually accept criticism about his projects, as Luke remarks:

> *We had the materiality matrix last year, and showed the results to Robert. He couldn't accept some of the speeches we collected from employees or suppliers. He commented that their complaints were absurd, "completely out of reality!" But the situation is out of his reality, not theirs.*

Our analysis indicates that this defensive tendency to blame the national culture or customers, invalidates attempts to change the organization. In short, the blame is transferred to the general public. Customers are accused of being "out of reality", and departments' attempts to develop an app result in many failures. In brief, blame-shifting contributes to the persistence of silos and the futility of sustainability initiatives.

Naturalizing defeat – Another sign of maintaining current boundaries is the managers' framing of the marginalization of sustainability at Globalcar as a given, an unchangeable, inevitable situation. The central argument is that since employees and managers actually do not want to change the organization, they implement silo-busting initiatives only symbolically and superficially. Past experiences reinforce this response when projects do not generate meaningful operational change. Fausto (dealer relationships analyst), comments about his experiences (Table 2):

> *I've seen consultancies come and go. From time to time, they spend loads of money to show what's wrong with the organization, even though we all know the answer. Then managers realize they'd have to change a lot. They give up and leave things the way they are. After some years, they do the same thing again.*

In Fausto's view, the company follows a symbolic implementation pattern that eventually keeps things as they are. Silo-busting initiatives are just a new situation that corroborates this pattern of negativity. Assuming that the organization will not change no matter what they do demonstrates this "naturalizing defeat". It is this defeatist assumption that precedes inaction. Managers simply conclude that their solutions cannot improve the situation. They cannot mitigate sustainability's marginalization caused by the silos because they would have to "change a lot". As Arthur states in Vignette 3, he cannot monitor other departments' changes once the workshop is over. The problem is beyond his capabilities. Similarly, in Vignette 4, the sustainability team's members feel there is nothing they can do but watch departments fight for the app project ownership.

These defensive responses to the silo-busting initiatives, to a certain extent, are not surprising. Globalcar is trying to provoke a radical change in how managers and departments interact with each other. However, our analysis indicates that the patterns of blame-shifting and naturalizing defeat are predominant enough to compromise the implementation of silo-busting initiatives. As Vignettes 3 and 4 substantiate, such implementations start off well, with workshops and attempts to create synergy in similar projects. Consequently, it is necessary to take a closer look at the dynamics involved in implementing initiatives to contest boundaries at Globalcar. A deeper investigation could explain how the lack of integration of sustainability remains despite all the efforts to change this atmosphere of stagnation.

We mapped three different mechanisms involved in negotiating boundaries: enacting survival instincts, waiting for momentum, and allowing fading out. Vignette 5 illustrates an attempt (and failure) of structuring a sustainability strategy that is hindered by a silo-busting initiative: the job rotation scheme.

Vignette 5 – The sustainability strategy – In 2016, the sustainability manager and his team prepared a plan to be implemented over the subsequent years. It contained new projects that would be conducted directly by the department and pre-existing projects that would continue, but now with the support of the sustainability team. Thirty-three projects were divided into economic, social and environmental pillars. They involved the reduction of CO2 emissions and improvements in production processes and diversity, the creation of a sustainability committee, and the search for synergies with the Globalcar Social Responsibility Foundation. In 2017, however, when the company decided to implement a job rotation policy among managers, a colleague from the purchasing department replaced the sustainability manager. Robert, the new manager, has never worked with sustainability before, and unexpectedly, decides not to follow the strategy created by his predecessor. Sara, a sustainability analyst, explains:

When he started here, the first thing I did was to show him this report [with the sustainability strategy]. I explained to him what we were thinking of doing. I'm not sure what happened. Maybe Robert thought it was too complicated, or it would demand many conversations with other departments. The fact is that he said we should rethink our strategy, so we had to stop everything again. Truth be told, he did not want to use the material that another manager had produced.

Since Robert's decision, sustainability initiatives at Globalcar have been broadly organized around social, economic, and environmental pillars, but still without a precise plan coordinated with the rest of the organization.

The excerpt above illustrates the dynamics involved in the process of negotiating boundaries at Globalcar. It reveals mechanisms that help us understand how defensive responses dominate attempts to dissolve boundaries.

Activating survival instincts – This mechanism occurs when the efforts to dissolve boundaries only partially address the broader political and competitive environment exacerbated by silofication. Consequently, managers face new or unknown scenarios, and their inexorable survival instincts are activated to guarantee their current resources, projects, or even jobs. This reaction can be attributed to the fact that Globalcar is located in an economically unstable country. For instance, Vignette 5 shows that the job rotation scheme leads to unpredicted outcomes. Ideally, by changing departments every three years or so, the "territoriality feeling that emerges when executives remain for a more extended period in the same department would not exist", explained Jennifer (VPHR). However, Robert's disregard for previous sustainability activities suggests that the job rotation practice leads to only negligible change. Silofication is maintained as it is, and Globalcar's sustainability initiatives remain marginalized. With no prior sustainability experience, Robert distorts the initiative's primary goal in his favor, reinforcing territoriality instead of mitigating it. Interestingly, in our conversations with him, he did not seem to realize that he was asserting his territoriality, even blame-shifting the problem to other departments, such as his previous one. He argued that the manager who replaced him decided to limit transparency and relationships with other departments, thereby strengthening the walls of the silos.

Cross-functional projects and shared indicators present similar examples (Table 2). Confronted with new projects that could divert resources from the already consolidated departmental personnel and budget structures, managers become boundary incumbents. Even if they recognize that the problems of silos threaten sustainability, they tend to resort to blame-shifting or naturalizing defeat.

Waiting for momentum – Another mechanism that, in our analysis, undermines silo-busting initiatives is waiting for momentum, i.e., the deliberate decision to launch projects with simpler actions to create a semblance of change. The rationale is that managers will realize the benefits of cross-functionality. Ideally, these initiatives would evolve into more complex and profound changes in the organization, yet this anticipated momentum might never come to pass. One example is the Debureaucratization Office team’s list of bureaucratic processes at Globalcar, beginning with the easiest and fastest ones. The team intends to produce immediate results and later move to those processes that demand more negotiations and collaboration from other departments. What happens is that they become known at Globalcar as the team that solves minor daily inconveniences, such as simplifying the meeting rooms’ scheduling system, or creating standards for Microsoft Outlook events. Their scope of action is gradually reduced, as they complete the list of easy tasks and wait for other departments to trust them to simplify more complicated processes. Instead of generating momentum, we argue that they strengthen those who “naturalize defeat”. They leave untouched the intricate problems that the organization faces, as the proposed solutions do not seem to match their complexity.

Other initiatives in Table 2 that present the same mechanism are the training program “Walk the Talk”, shared objectives, and HR processes’ reorganization. In all such initiatives, their initial implementation steps consider Globacar's competitive and political environment. However, by starting with smaller steps to gain trust, they wait for a moment of realization of the cross-departmental benefits that may never come. We argue that, even if managers are on board with such initiatives, they are unable to imagine how they can solve more complex problems. As a result, they conclude that the company is unwilling to spark real change, thus naturalizing defeat.

Fading out: Finally, silo-busting initiatives may leave a margin for managers to gradually relinquish control or fade out after initial steps to promote cross-departmental interactions. This process occurs mainly because of a lack of previously developed follow-up actions that allow departments to continue their activities as they are, blame-shifting or normalizing defeat. Hence, silos and the marginalization of sustainability initiatives remain relatively unchanged, even with the proliferation of attempts to dissolve boundaries. Exemplifying this futile effort are the workshops created by the Debureaucratization Office, as illustrated in Vignette 4. Participants agree with changes in their processes to increase synergy between departments. Even so, Robert and his team do not know how to verify whether any actions are taking place. Without follow-up measures, managers assume that the problem lies in other and more pressing matters or that the organization is only symbolically prepared to change its ways.

The initiatives "Beyond Our Horizon" and "Walk the Talk" (Table 2) suffer from the same problem. While participants underline their commitment to sustainability and express a willingness to make the organizational walls more porous, no actual follow-up activities are in place to monitor progress. After some time, managers, immersed in a pervasive silofication, continue their established routines as usual. The implementation of silo-busting initiatives may present more than one of the three mechanisms outlined above. For example, shared objectives activate the survival instinct, as managers face new situations that may jeopardize some of their resources. Simultaneously, when these objectives were developed, the team was aware of the organization’s challenging situation and decided to wait for the necessary momentum. The combination of both mechanisms reinforces failure, as managers become defensive and shared goals lose relevance.

Therefore, even with many initiatives to dissolve boundaries at Globalcar and incentivize cross-departmental collaboration, silofication and resistance to change are the norm. The mechanisms explain how implementing such silo-busting initiatives leads to blame-shifting and naturalizing defeat, resulting in little organizational change, preventing the integration of sustainability across departments and functions.

A process model of how boundary negotiation maintains silofication

We now consolidate the different aspects of our analysis into a process model. We have shown that Globalcar already understood that silos bring problems to sustainability implementation. Silos became more than an encapsulation of the everyday dynamics between departments. They led to a silofication process, which we defined as the pervasive ongoing self-reinforcing process of silos leading to silos, in an acute lack of collaboration and knowledge exchange between working teams. Silofication underscores the notion of organizations as polities, as an assemble of departments with different interests and goals.

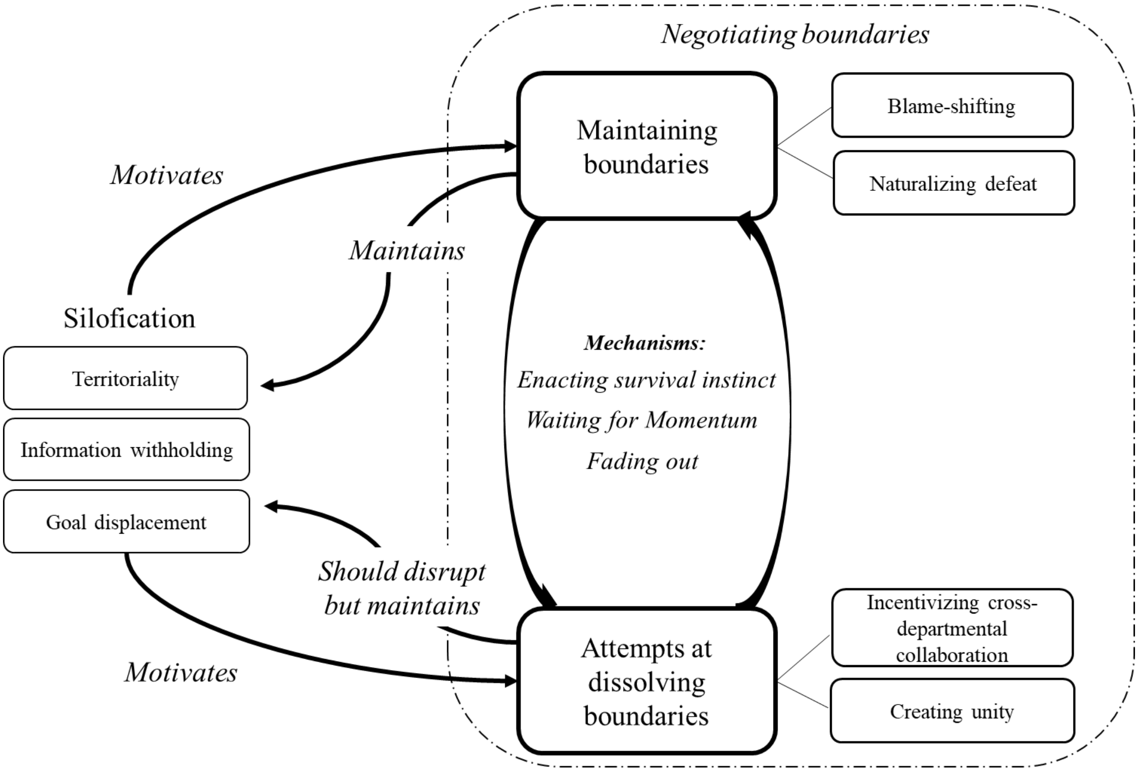
In this sense, we have argued that silofication has two manifestations. The first one is the territoriality behavior of managers who aim to protect their resources and projects. In doing so, they undermine broader organizational goals—such as sustainability. The second manifestation is information withholding, i.e., when departments are not willing to share what they consider as strategic information, thereby hindering sustainability efforts that require the consolidation of information from disparate parts of the organization. These manifestations of silos lead to goal displacement. As departments do not know exactly what others are doing or expecting from projects, managers simplify their tasks and objectives, diverging from the initiatives' initial goals. In our case, sustainability goals are increasingly becoming displaced, with the simplification of targets and tasks to display tangible results.

The understanding of the problems of silofication in the implementation of sustainability triggered boundary work to negotiate current departmental boundaries through a series of "silo-busting" initiatives, accompanied by managers' defensive responses from managers. Silofication, therefore, motivates both movements to change and to maintain boundaries between departments. The attempts to alter boundaries are designed to nurture unity between teams, with discourses that emphasize the need to shatter the silos and implement sustainability. They can also assume the shape of initiatives to incentivize cross-departmental collaboration. Despite a promising start, the efforts are weakened by defensive responses from managers to maintain boundaries as they are. We have demonstrated that this process occurs through two dominant means: blame-shifting the problems to third parties and naturalizing defeat, claiming that silofication is unsolvable.

According to our data, three main mechanisms can explain the dynamics of trying to dissolve boundaries and how these attempts gradually lose their steam, finally explaining the predominance of defensive responses at Globalcar. First, these actions trigger survival instincts in the managers, as they fear losing power and resources. Second, given the organization's political atmosphere resulting from silofication, the mission to dissolve boundaries has had a modest start. It is as if managers are waiting for the momentum to implement more significant change, but such changes might never materialize, as the images of initiatives are consolidated as superficial or only incremental. Finally, those initiatives might fade out since it is difficult to carry out follow-up actions. Employees and managers are again involved in the pervasive vicious cycle of the silofication process.

In Figure 2, we present the general process from the identification of silofication and its characteristics to motivating attempts at dissolving and defending boundaries. This process model also captures the different mechanisms involved in negotiating boundaries that end up maintaining silos as they are, ultimately preventing the integration of sustainability across organizational departments.

Figure 2 - A process model of silofication and the failure of sustainability integration



4.4 Discussion

During our fieldwork, it became apparent that Globalcar's sustainability analysts had very little interaction with the rest of the organization. Also, minor social and environmental projects, when implemented, required much more effort than predicted, as departments were reluctant to collaborate with each other. Globalcar was divided into silos that evolved over time into a silofication process that persists, even with attempts at dissolving boundaries. Our analysis contributes to both theory and practice by providing new insights into the impacts of silos on the implementation of sustainability.

Contributions to theory

Our study makes two main contributions to theory. First, we unravel the traditional management problem of integration (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967) in implementing sustainability (Hahn et al., 2018; Hengst et al., 2020). The second contribution is to organization boundary studies (Langley et al., 2019).

The integration challenge in sustainability implementation

To integrate sustainability into core management functions (Hengst et al., 2020; Maas, Schaltegger, & Crutzen, 2016), the first step is to embrace possible tensions between economic, social and environmental goals (Hahn et al., 2015; Pinkse et al., 2019). In addition, building internal legitimacy (Hengst et al., 2020) and managerial consensus (Crilly et al., 2012) on the importance of sustainability are alternatives that could avert failure. Our study expands on these findings, bringing a case in which there is growing high-level managerial support alongside everyday dysfunctions that impede successful sustainability implementation.

We unfolded the integration challenge (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967) in sustainability implementation by exploring one case of extreme specialization (Lencioni, 2006). We moved beyond the idea of understanding the different social, economic and environmental dilemmas that sustainability engenders. While we reinforced that embracing tensions is important to start a process of change towards sustainability integration, we also showed that this step is dissociated from the actual implementation.

In this sense, we have deepened understanding of how organizations adopt an acceptance-defensive approach to deal with sustainability tensions (Pinkse et al., 2019). Within this view, although organizations recognize the contradictions involved in sustainability, they end up protecting their core management practices instead of modifying them to integrate sustainability. Additionally, we have demonstrated the internal dynamics involved in such attempts (and failure). By focusing on the daily struggles in implementing tasks involved in sustainability projects, we have revealed how such seemingly innocuous daily inter-departmental interactions matter as much as recognizing the specificities of sustainability and reaching managerial consensus (cf. Crilly et al., 2012; Hengst et al., 2020) on its importance. Behind the idea of protecting organizations' "core business", organizations are polities (Weber & Waeger, 2017). The multitude of interests within organizations might not be aligned with the necessary integration to implement sustainability.

Our research has also suggested that organizations might "muddle through" (Crilly et al., 2012) their sustainability integration processes by disregarding the role of structure (Soderstrom & Weber, 2020) and organization design (Greenwood & Miller, 2010) in sustaining routinized behaviors (Giddens, 2005). Silos, as a discursive manifestation of an extreme case of departmental specialization, lead to a silofication problem that cannot be solved with the mere creation of interaction opportunities. Over time, the idea of firm boundaries between departments becomes normalized, as evidenced in segmented budgets, teams and projects. As a consequence, opportunities for middle-managers to interact are appropriated by them, and used to fulfil their own personal interests. For instance, the creation of parallel strategies to implement sustainability (Hengst et al., 2020) in contexts with high specialization between departments might become just another way for managers to increase their internal power and prestige. Instead of the expected collaboration and legitimacy that would emerge from such a new opportunity to interact and generate a consensus around sustainability, the result is space for the development of "turf wars".

Ironically, therefore, the structure established to facilitate the implementation of sustainability (cf. Soderstrom & Weber, 2020) is actually enabling its marginalization and the maintenance of existing ineffective cross-departmental relationships. As we have shown, this paradoxical situation occurs even with broad and continuous high-level management support to promote internal communication and sustainability initiatives. This finding differs from most studies that underline the centrality of bringing senior management on board (Dyllick & Muff, 2016). Although we agree that these solutions are important to further implement sustainability, our analysis explains why sustainability fails to be integrated into core managerial practices across departments.

The ambiguities involved in the everyday of negotiating boundaries.

Boundary studies in organizational contexts have broadened significantly our appreciation of how individuals and teams design, raise or realign boundaries between themselves (Langley et al., 2019). These boundaries might clearly define roles (Azambuja & Islam, 2019), defend jurisdictions and interests (Bourdieu, 1977; Burri, 2008), or develop mutual understandings to promote collaboration (Allen, 2008; Strauss et al., 1994). Heightening our awareness of how boundaries help negotiate daily social practices (Strauss et al., 1994) aimed at implementing sustainability, our research makes a unique contribution to boundary literature (cf. Langley et al., 2019). Although the extant literature indicates that boundary work processes are situated in a context (Strauss et al., 1994), and might lead to unintended consequences (Howard-Grenville, Nelson, Earle, Haack, & Young, 2017; O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008), there is still limited understanding of the micro-mechanisms involved in such demarcations of boundaries (Langley et al., 2019).

With our study of Globalcar's everyday sustainability implementation, we have captured the subtleties involved in boundary negotiation processes, while also identifying specific mechanisms that explain how attempts at dissolving boundaries might be impeded by defensive responses. Understanding silos as a particular boundary phenomenon leads to many boundary-spanning strategies that have been suggested as possible options to "bust" silos. Examples include the adoption of "agile" methodologies to debureaucratize activities (McKinsey, 2017), rethinking of organization design (Boynton & Zmud, 1987), the creation of common objectives and targets (Serrat & Serrat, 2017; Sullivan, 2018), or even embracing silos and adapting to each one of them (Gyrd-Jones, Helm, & Munk, 2013). This abundance of possibilities reaffirms the complexities of reconsidering how groups work in silos, especially given their highly political context.

Indeed, we have identified that the effort to dissolve boundaries between teams prompts a defensive movement from the same managers who support organizational change. Despite having clear roles as boundary-spanners (Goodrich et al., 2020; Monti et al., 2014; Richter, West, Van Dick, & Dawson, 2006), the same organizational members or teams that are challenging organizational boundaries might present incumbent behaviors, protecting boundaries in their daily interactions. For example, Robert, the sustainability manager, is an advocate for the need to change organizational boundaries and implement sustainability at Globalcar. At the same time, some of his daily behaviors and interactions with his team contradict his discursive support.

In sum, our findings indicate how a movement to make boundaries more porous to reach collaboration for sustainability ended up preserving boundaries, identifying three mechanisms (activating survival instincts, waiting for momentum, and fading out) that explain how managers' interactions might undermine attempts at dissolving boundaries. One explanation for this tendency might be the multitude of interests involved in such processes (Weber & Waeger, 2017). Changing organizational boundaries towards a more collaborative environment is one of the many interests that managers and departments have. As a consequence, managers can act in mundane daily activities that contradict their own pro-change discourses and broader organizational goals—even though they might be aware of their roles as boundary challengers (cf. Azambuja & Islam, 2019).

As an implication, attempts at negotiating boundaries within a structured social order (Giddens, 2005) can culminate in no change at all no matter how much support there is from senior management. The mechanisms we identified between dissolving and upholding boundaries accounted for the dynamic interplay between a more strategic and organization-wide plan to change boundaries and everyday boundary work in micro-interactions (Allen, 2000; Apesoa-Varano & Varano, 2014; Reich, 2016) in sustainability implementation. Even if these daily actions were frequently subtle and in the background of the well-developed plan to alter boundaries, as in our case, their accumulation was strong enough to prevent significant organizational changes.

Research and practical implications

Interpreted together, our contributions to sustainability and boundary studies indicate the persistent difficulties of sustainability implementation processes. Sustainability challenges structured departmental boundaries, but changing them while immersed in them is an arduous undertaking. Daily materializations of such boundaries (e.g. budgets, personnel, specific targets) underscore and incentivize segregation between teams. In our case, this pattern appeared when the silo-busting initiatives were implemented in an already highly competitive and political environment.

It can be argued that our findings could be applied to similar contexts. For instance, sustainability teams might attempt to source from suppliers that also consider sustainability factors in their operations. In order to do so, they might need the collaboration of other departments, such as procurement, with different interests and goals. The mechanisms we identified in our analysis can be present in these cases as well. Such attempts to create more porous boundaries between sustainability and procurement might be hampered by activating survival instincts, waiting for momentum and fading out.

Furthermore, by identifying the nuances involved in such processes, organizations could endeavor to neutralize silofication and its manifestations so that their initiatives towards boundary change meet their outcomes and stimulate cross-departmental collaboration. In this sense, structuring a sustainability department with specific and clearly defined initiatives (e.g., roles, reports, indicators, sustainability matrix) and top management support is insufficient, especially when contrasted to what is typically suggested by the literature (Junior et al., 2014; Lauriano et al., 2014; Searcy, 2012; Stacchezzini, Melloni, & Lai, 2016). Daily interactions between the sustainability team and the rest of the organization are shaped by the broader context in which the organization is embedded.

In a siloed organization in which intense competition and politics are firmly entrenched, the formal structures for sustainability contribute little for the organization to reach its expected outcomes. Instead, future research and implementation efforts could be put into formulating alternatives to the pervasive mechanisms of silofication. Avoiding territoriality and information withholding might be the first steps toward breaking up silos and facilitating the achievement of specific sustainability goals.

In terms of territoriality, projects that are responses to new societal demands, such as diversity, could be an opportunity for the creation of organization-wide initiatives. Although the sustainability department "owns" these initiatives, some degree of responsibility for them could be shared by other parts of the organization. This burden sharing could help reduce information withholding as well, as departments would need to collaborate with the sustainability team to reach their new targets, and yet they would not have particular expertise to conduct such implementations by themselves.

Therefore, one promising way to implement sustainability and break the barrier of silofication seems to be the creation of demand from other parts of the organization to the point that, in a political calculation that managers conduct, collaboration becomes a more attractive option than silofication. Future research could develop such alternatives, exploring other contexts and implementations.

Finally, we acknowledge that each sustainability project emphasizes a spectrum of aspects (e.g., car leasing to firefighters differs significantly from the development of an app). However, the pervasive silofication is a broader contextual factor present in and reinforced by daily interactions. Ultimately, the case of Globalcar underscores the need to look at formal and informal structures for sustainability, but with a broader organizational perspective that considers possible obstacles to collaboration obstacles.

Conclusion and future steps

In this study, we have articulated the complex dimensions of a relevant organizational problem that impedes sustainability implementation, one of the world's most pressing concerns. While our single case study prevents us from making broader generalizations, the case of Globalcar is probably also present in other organizations. In terms of future research opportunities, the possible psychological facets of silos(Diamond & Allcorn, 2003) often arose during our time in the field. Our informants would present some pre-cognitive behaviors that were beyond the scope of this study. For instance, the defensive responses from managers and employees, even from the sustainability department, seemed to be automatic. This reaction could be a potential topic for future studies, that is, an exploration of how and to what extent these unconscious behaviors affect sustainability implementation and boundary work.

4.5 Moving beyond the everyday tensions of silos

The daily observations at Globalcar revealed that silos significantly harmed the development of efforts to understand and implement sustainability. Moreover, the recognition of the tensions created by silos did not translate to an improvement of practices, or a solution to the problems in sustainability implementation. Consequently, this case reaffirms that acknowledging tensions might be dissociated from solving them (Joseph et al., 2020; Pinkse et al., 2019).

The situation at Globalcar also suggests that trying to mitigate the tensions and failing is a possibility that cannot be discarded. Despite the organization's actions to improve cross-departmental collaboration, it failed when managers presented defensive mechanisms in such a political and hypercompetitive organization. My closeness to the field gave me a heightened understanding of mechanisms behind such failure. In attempting to maintain their departments' status quo, these department heads could not promote organizational change even though many of them supported silo-busting initiatives. Even the sustainability manager, acting as one of the organization's primary boundary challengers, struggled to be consistent in his contestation actions. As a consequence of this process of negotiating boundaries, the problems are self-reinforcing continuously.

However, from the employees' perspective, what are the repercussions of these unresolved tensions over time? The first case brought a picture of failure in sustainability implementation, but I did not focus on specific employees' perceptions. The second case sheds light on this question by exploring the tensions arising from Globalcar's biannual scheme.

The organization creates a fantasy of rapid career progression during the selection process, but this fantasy is difficult to sustain once trainees start working at the organization. My immersion in the field made me aware of how trainees perceived and reacted to a situation that they considered hypocritical. Nonetheless, the project has been running for ten years, and despite criticism from employees, it will continue, showing a puzzling, routinized behavior that I wanted to investigate further.

Thus, I dive into this case to probe the (un)conscious events leading to the (re)construction of hypocrisy, also illustrating repercussions of continuous sustainability tensions. Although recent studies argue that broader societal problems may persist when organizations discursively adopt strategies that uphold existing practices (Pinkse et al., 2019), the dynamics of such situations within organizations are yet to be explored, especially from the perspective of employees.

5. “It’s a reality check!”[2]

The (re)construction of organizational hypocrisy via cynical fantasies

We had a meeting with the vice-president of human resources in which we exposed the limitations we faced on the graduate scheme, such as the lack of support and training. He just moved on to the next slide of his presentation, and, as if we had said nothing, he announced blithely: “I know we have problems, but we will not give up. Next year we will improve, and even double the number of trainees.”…We were in disbelief.

This meeting occurred at a Latin American subsidiary of a multinational automaker (hereafter “Globalcar”, a pseudonym). The company runs a biannual graduate scheme to attract recently graduated professionals eager for a managerial position. A graduate scheme offers a structured career in a precarious job market in which zero-hour contracts and under-employment are common (OIT, 2020). In this context, Globalcar’s human resources (HR) team creates a compelling image of a modern and responsive organization attracting the most qualified recent graduates.

However, trainees soon experience a hierarchical, bureaucratic, and sluggish firm, in stark contrast to the initial image presented. Our observations and interviews led us to a “mystery” (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). Although the scheme is very competitive, has been running for over a decade, and will probably continue, the HR team ignores trainees’ complaints and fails to follow through on promises made during the highly competitive selection process. Taken together, these contradictions lead trainees to believe that the company is not practicing what it preaches, which is characteristic of hypocrisy cases.

[2] Dr Diego Salazar-Morales is the co-author of this paper. Thus, the text is written in third-person plural. As mentioned in the preface, the article is in the third round of revise and resubmit for publication at Organization Studies.

How can hypocrisy be maintained over time, even when it is exposed and challenged? This question matters because hypocrisy is not an evaluation that an organization would want associated with its image and reputation (Carlos & Lewis, 2018; Wagner et al., 2019). Moreover, perceptions of hypocrisy can lead to employees' demotivation and even turnover (Babu et al., 2019; Greenbaum et al., 2015; Scheidler et al., 2019). Despite these possible outcomes, current studies do not explain more complex cases where hypocrisy is stubbornly persistent, such as in the case of Globalcar's graduate scheme. The literature typically offers a simplistic conception of hypocrisy as a rational and ephemeral phenomenon, whereas we argue that it is a pervasive process that involves individuals' subjective identification, appropriation, or resistance to it (Contu, 2008; Glynos, 2010; Kenny et al., 2020).

Drawing on 480 hours of ethnographic observations, semi-structured interviews, and documents from the organization, we explore trainees' daily concerns and problems, their attempts and failures to change the organization, as well as the associated uncertainty and insecurity brought about by the misalignments they experience. In our analysis, we adopt insights from the psychoanalytical concepts of *symptoms* and *fantasy* (Lacan, 1966; Žižek, 1989) that permit us to explore the subject's *psyche* amid an organizational context (Kenny et al., 2020). We also use Peter Sloterdijk's concept of *cynical reason* (Sloterdijk, 1984), which allows us to investigate how individuals transgress the organizational fantasy's unattainability (Arnaud & Vidaillet, 2018) by renouncing reality and embracing hypocritical premises even though they know that the latter is not true. Our results reveal that this hypocrisy is tied to the fantasy of rapid career progression and work stability—a fantasy that is shattered when trainees actually start working at Globalcar. Far from understanding and solving the problems, the HR team and the trainees become cynical, in a process that guarantees the continuation of the project and, therefore, the hypocritical organizational behavior.

Our contributions are twofold. First, we answer recent calls for a more dynamic view of corporate hypocrisy (Christensen et al. 2019; Wagner et al. 2019). We explain how individuals perceive and appropriate the cycle of hypocrisy—how they situate themselves in it while being affected by it in a pervasive and perpetual process. We also contribute to the psychoanalytic organizational literature (Bloom, 2016; Böhm & Batta, 2010; Kenny et al., 2020) by identifying how hypocrisy is a reconstructed fantasy via cynical reasoning, which is exacerbated in a peripheral capitalist context.

5.1 Theoretical framework

Organizational hypocrisy

Although there is disagreement in the literature on the definition of hypocrisy (Wagner et al., 2019), most research identifies the inconsistency between words and deeds as its central element (Christensen, Morsing, et al., 2019; Effron et al., 2018; Wagner et al., 2019). Currently, studies either explore hypocrisy as an *instrumental and strategic* phenomenon or as *perceptions* of stakeholders.

The first group contends that hypocritical leaders exhibit a deliberate disconnection between their speech and the actual practices they undertake in response to stakeholders' demands (Brunsson, 1989; Cho et al., 2015; Lipson, 2007). For instance, Brunsson (1989) argues that budgets can be allotted with little or no action to spend them; leaders may delegate activities to subordinates, generating some distance between ideas and actions, and constant reforms and unachievable targets create the image of change but may not be followed by the corresponding practices. In these examples, the author describes what he labels as "organized hypocrisy", meaning tactics that organizations develop to operationalize hypocrisy in daily activities (Brunsson, 1989).

Hypocrisy is thus instrumental for leaders to manage conflicting demands without spending substantial resources to fulfill them (Brunsson, 1993; Lipson, 2007). It allows firms to gain legitimacy from different audiences in complex scenarios, developing multiple organizational façades (Brunsson, 1989; Cho et al., 2015; Christensen et al., 2013). Advocates of the instrumental nature of hypocrisy disregard any morality threshold involved in the intentional act of misleading stakeholders. Hypocrisy is seen as any other rational process—an organizational task that involves a certain level of articulation between talk and action (Brunsson, 1989).

Since Brunsson's work, organizational hypocrisy studies have proliferated, moving from the instrumental idea to a more perceptual view often rooted in social psychology (Effron et al., 2018). These studies define hypocrisy as a perception of false claims or behavioral inconsistencies that emerge from leaders and their organizations (Wagner, 2019), foregrounding the perspective of morality in hypocrisy (Effron et al., 2018) and highlighting its adverse effects on different groups. In this view, the definition of hypocrisy depends on the stakeholders' judgment of an organization's actions based on the perceived degree of morality in each case (Effron et al., 2018; Wagner et al., 2019).

The topic of hypocrisy has received growing attention in the contexts of marketing (Wagner et al., 2009), corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Babu et al., 2020; Janney & Gove, 2011; Scheidler et al., 2019), and sustainability (Carlos & Lewis, 2018; Higgins et al., 2019; Snelson-Powell et al., 2019). This focus is perhaps a reflection of greater societal demands for organizations to "walk their talk", especially in regard to complex topics fraught with tensions and contradictions (Hahn et al., 2018; Hengst et al., 2019) .

Common themes include consumer dissatisfaction (Arli et al., 2017; Shim & Yang, 2016), moral outrage (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016), tax avoidance (Sikka, 2010), and insincerity in sustainability reporting (Carlos & Lewis, 2018; Wang et al., 2016). Despite the growing corporate hypocrisy literature focused on external stakeholders, employees have received considerably less attention, although a few studies have argued that hypocrisy may lead to demotivation in CSR implementation (Babu et al., 2020; Scheidler et al., 2019), or even to an increase in turnover intentions (Greenbaum et al., 2015; Philippe & Koehler, 2005).

In sum, there has been a shift in hypocrisy studies from an organizational and instrumental understanding of the phenomenon to a more nuanced, perceptual, and focused examination of how stakeholders perceive it. Nevertheless, even with these recent developments towards a more complex understanding of organizational hypocrisy, the literature has limitations. Most studies center on specific episodes of apparent hypocrisy and its consequences (Christensen, Morsing, et al., 2019). However, such perspectives conceal intricacies beyond the purely rational "disconnections of speech and deeds" or the "straightforward reactions from stakeholders".

Limitations of hypocrisy studies

Organizational hypocrisy studies have largely ignored that the phenomenon entails a network of subjective and contextual interactions between actors. The few studies on employees and hypocrisy fail to consider that talk is already a form of action, and reality changes and is changed by it (Christensen et al., 2019). The dynamics of everyday interactions, as well as the (re)production and appropriation of hypocritical discourses by employees, remains unexplored.

Advocates of the "instrumental" approach to hypocrisy do not take into account firms' internal dynamics, in other words, that key stakeholders can also resist, embrace, and contribute to shaping and enforcing hypocrisy. Although some studies claim that a certain trust level is necessary to sustain a hypocritical façade (Cho et al., 2015) or that organizations should avoid being too hypocritical (Brunsson 1989), little is known about the stakeholders' role in creating and maintaining hypocrisy, especially in contexts in which employees' desires and fantasies are enacted (e.g., successful career development, or a sustainable, fair, meritocratic organization). Similarly, despite recent efforts to assess the effects of hypocrisy on stakeholders, research has focused on the straightforward "morally questionable" outcomes of hypocrisy. For instance, employees who detect hypocrisy and resign from their companies

(Babu et al., 2020; Scheidler et al., 2019) are only the "tip of the iceberg", given that there might be several previous and intricate relationships that led them to make this decision. The possible pervasive impacts of hypocrisy and these ongoing relationships between speeches and actions have been overlooked. Notably, studies have minimized hypocrisy to an isolated organizational phenomenon in which stakeholders perceive and react to it, disregarding broader contextual aspects. This limits the explanation of persistent cases, such as Globalcar's graduate scheme in which hypocrisy is challenged and maintained.

A new ontology and framework for organizational hypocrisy

To capture subjectivities and contextual nuances in hypocrisy that have been, to date, sidelined by the literature, and to explain how hypocrisy can be (re)constructed, we use the psychoanalytical concepts of *symptoms* and *fantasy* (Lacan, 1966; Žižek, 1989), as well as Peter Sloterdijk's concept of *cynical reason* (Sloterdijk, 1984). These concepts are ontologically rooted in language as the central element that gives meaning to subjects in organizations. Lacan asserts that language and our fragile sense of self are intertwined (Kenny et al., 2020), as language structures and articulates an individual's psyche in three interacting realms or registers: the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real orders (Harding, 2007; Lacan, 2006a).

The Imaginary order explains the identification process of an individual (a child, in Lacanian terms), when s/he is presented an image by another person (or a mirror), acquiring a sense of "oneness and completion" (Kenny, 2012, p. 1176). The wholesomeness of the imaginary is transitory and gives individuals the burning desire to "return" to this state. As individuals mature, they start finding completion, recognition, and satisfaction in elements and rules embodied in their social world (Lacan 2006d). Labeled as the Symbolic order, such systems of written and unwritten rules—also referred to as the "big Other" (Lacan & Granoff, 1956: 268)—become the "yardstick" of the individuals' lives in which they strive to occupy prominent positions and to "be granted recognition" (Arnaud, Stijn, & Vanheule, 2005). In other words, the desire for "wholesomeness" tends to be codified into "influential" elements of the Symbolic order. The Real order informs individuals about distortions in the Symbolic order's rules and the morals they comply with (Lacan & Granoff, 1956: 269). It exposes societal rules and contradictions in the individual's unconscious and reveals the irrelevance of their desires, which only make sense if codified in the Symbolic order (Žižek, 2006,12).

Drawing on this ontology, adherents of the psychoanalytical approach to organizational studies have structured two grander literature streams: the clinical and the critical (Arnaud & Vidaillet, 2018). The former addresses the psycho-dynamic processes within organizations by analyzing the effects of the Symbolic's societal norms on the psyche (their Imaginary), thus shaping individuals' fantasies, aspirations, and actions in organizations (Driver, 2017; Hoedemaekers, 2018; Kenny et al., 2020; Lacan, 2006). Common topics include the subjective identification with leaders (Picard and Islam, 2020), work motivation, the contextual role of emotions in the workplace (Hoedemaekers, 2018), and the appropriation of, and identification with, organizational roles (Kenny et al., 2020; Kenny, 2010).

Critical studies based on psychoanalysis explore the role of the Real in threatening individuals with the revelation of the impossibility of attaining their fantasies in the Symbolic (Arnaud & Vidaillet, 2018). In this stream, scholars explain how ideological rationalities in the workplace are rooted in "ultra-liberal" capitalist societies, the "traumatic" truth that capitalism carries, and how individuals avoid confronting it (Bloom, 2016; Vanheule, 2016). Typical topics are the subjective perception of power (Stavrakakis, 2010; Vidaillet & Gamot, 2015) and how fantasy fosters individuals' ideological adherence to certain discourses, hence weakening resistance (Vidaillet & Gamot, 2015). Studies also examine the narratives and relationships inherent in capitalist organizations, which, through practices of painful enjoyment (death drive and *jouissance*), lead to subjects remaining in exploitative jobs under fantasies of professional realization (Bloom, 2016).

Both psychoanalytical approaches to organizations allow us to move beyond a simplistic understanding of hypocrisy manifested in contextual cues of written, oral, and behavioral forms. We thus analyze the concepts that aid us in this endeavor, explaining some initial connections with corporate hypocrisy that we further explore in our analysis.

The symptom and the truth it hides

Symptoms are the initial basis for understanding how the big Other influences individuals' psyche (Žižek 1989). They contain hidden meaning and reveal an apparent contradiction underlying individuals' "hesitations, inflections, inaccuracies, and irregularities" (Lacan, 2006a: 104), which is further manifested in utterances, revolts, and minor unconformities in the organization. Symptoms scratch the surface of *truth*, of the Real beneath hypocritical discourses in organizations—what they try to hide, to mask, and/or what they try to render imperceptible (Žižek, 1989). Symptoms reveal the potential false premises under which organizations operate and make individuals aware of their fundamental "lack", their unmet needs, or *enclosed kernel desires* (Žižek, 1989, p. 16). According to organization scholars (Kenny et al., 2020; Picard & Islam, 2020), by exploring symptoms, we can identify the *fantasy* sustaining individuals' actions—uncovering the hypocritical narratives they have been following (Žižek 2008, pp. 7–8). Symptoms expose our fantasies and how we enjoy living them, even though such fantasies are based on false representations of social reality (Arnaud & Vidaillet, 2018; Hoedemaekers, 2018).

The fantasy, and its pleasure

Fantasy comprises an "imagined scenario representing the realization of our desire" (Žižek, 1989, p. 132). Fantasies are not only particular to individuals, but are also "externally" inscribed in organizational and/or social routines (Vanheule, 2016). Hence, fantasy can be simultaneously collective (what the *big Other* wants me to desire) and individual (how I *desire* what others *want*) (Lacan, 1966; Žižek, 2006: 49). This makes it pivotal to understanding how hypocrisy operates at the Imaginary level: it aligns the subject's ego with the external linguistic structure (and its social components) derived from the Symbolic (Žižek, 1989, p. 28).

Furthermore, fantasy has two essential functions in the workplace (Arnaud & Vidaillet, 2018; Kenny et al., 2020). First, it actively encrypts our desires and gives individuals a sense of organizational direction by teaching them "how to desire" (Žižek, 2006, p. 45). Second, it is vital to structuring the "unconscious" because it negotiates between the Symbolic and Real orders, thereby preventing the collapse of how individuals make sense of their world (Žižek, 2008: 43). In this sense, a fantasy can recraft the discursive elements explaining one's positionality in the Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary, enabling individuals to again enjoy the images of the accomplishment of their desires (Žižek, 2008, p. 43). Lacan calls this process *jouissance*, referring to the Freudian concept of "the pleasure principle" and its limits (Lacan 2006c:247). *Jouissance* is then a "surplus", something that overruns the principle of pleasure, that makes the individual move *beyond the pain in pursuit of one's desire* (Žižek, 1989, p. 50).

This "surplus" is the impetus that leads the individual to build a fantasy and *persist* in it, even though its falsity might have been acknowledged (Žižek, 2006, p. 53). In practice, individuals obtain certain *jouissance* by neutralizing the Real of their symptoms through recrafting their fantasies and reconfiguring them with what the big Other wants from them (Žižek, 2006, p. 63). In our case, hypocrisy tied to fantasy would mean that it is possible to recraft it indefinitely, realigning what organizations and employees expect from each other, and persisting in it, even when hypocrisy is evidenced.

The cynical reason

The consequences of a fantasy's collapse and its restoration forge a new type of individual: one who renounces the *truth* to persist with the *jouissance* that a false representation of reality provides (Žižek, 2006, p. 43). Drawing on the original form of Diogenes' "cynicism", Peter Sloterdijk (1983, p. 36) postulates that modern individuals have forged a new type of "cynical reason", permitting them to build a system of values that is elastic enough to guarantee self-preservation. He defines modern cynical reason as an "enlightened false consciousness", meaning that individuals, despite being "aware of the distance between the mask and reality" (Žižek, 1989, p. 25), insist on retaining "the mask". By following cynical rationality, individuals acknowledge a false representation of reality as part of the reality itself (Sloterdijk 1983, p. 38; Beyes 2014, p. 21). Individuals place their knowledge at the service of the hypocritical machine, thus giving consistency to the false representations of the social and organizational reality by wisely inverting their values and portraying "probity and integrity as the supreme form of dishonesty and the truth as the supreme form of lie" (Žižek, 1989, p. 26). Inspired by these conceptual frameworks, we explore our case guided by the following question: *How can hypocrisy be maintained over time, even when it is exposed and challenged?*

5.2 Methods

To elucidate the (re)construction of hypocrisy at Globalcar, we chose to conduct a qualitative case study. The perpetuation of a graduate scheme in which most participants were dissatisfied was the motivation to analyze this particular setting critically.

Theoretical and epistemological assumptions

This study—particularly from a psychoanalytic perspective—calls for the acknowledgment that we are also embedded in several contextual layers (e.g. background, organizational, national), with our subjectivity interfering with the analysis. Both authors come from economically emerging countries, have a background in International Relations and Political Science, and possess extremely critical predispositions. Given these factors, we were led to believe that we offered a complete explanation of our findings in this article's previous versions. The fantasy of complete knowledge of our case, granted by our first-hand experience in the field was, therefore, very much present in our work. However, this assumption was an illusion shattered by peers, who pointed to alternative explanations that were even more compelling for the situation at hand. Consequently, this article is an *account* of what we lived, analyzed, and interpreted from the angle of our own social reality, reworked in several iterations with other academics.

Reflecting on our positionality, we adopted measures to control for “bias” and ensure that we achieved what is conventionally accepted as academic rigor and overall quality in our research (Jonsen et al., 2018). First, we triangulated our observation analysis with multiple data sources, including interviews, archives, and videos—in several iterations—to confirm, question, or contest our findings. Second, we divided our roles in the fieldwork. While one of the researchers was immersed in the field, the other provided an external view of the case, acting as a “devil’s advocate” by questioning assumptions, premises, and initial conclusions. Finally, we adopted several measures common to qualitative studies, such as the use of software, analytical frameworks (e.g. Langley, 1999), and a structured coding system that satisfies concerns around the quality and validity of knowledge creation.

Case context: An executive graduate scheme in a (peripheral) capitalist context

Our case is set in Latin America’s peripheral capitalist context. Unlike “advanced capitalist societies”, the region is characterized by high levels of under-employment, with 51% of workers occupying informal jobs (OIT, 2020). In this context, graduate schemes are growing in popularity because they offer stable and rapid career progression. More than 40 large organizations in the country of our study offer such programs. A typical candidate applies to many of them with the hope of being accepted by at least one.

Globalcar offers a biannual graduate scheme that attracts recent graduates with the prospect of “a unique opportunity of career progression” over a relatively short term (18–24 months of training). The program is centered on job rotation experience, with trainees occupying promising and strategic positions in different subunits of the organization. The HR department, which is responsible for the conceptualization and implementation of the project, solicits exceptional “young talents” who will eventually become the next leaders at Globalcar.

The selection process is rigorous and arguably meritocratic, involving three stages: (i) examinations testing Logic, Mathematics, and English; (ii) evaluation of résumés, accompanied by group dynamics; and (iii) personal interviews with shortlisted candidates. The process lasts 6–8 months and concludes with the selection of between 10 to 20 young professionals who join the organization the following year. Launched in 2008, the program is part of Globalcar’s sustainability strategy and is frequently mentioned by top managers who proudly announce that the organization is developing its future leaders.

Data collection

We sourced data from ethnographic observations, interviews, reports, communications, Globalcar’s graduate scheme website, and video testimonials from the company’s managers and former participants. Figure 3 summarizes the collected data.

In early 2018, we sent an e-mail to Globalcar’s VP of human resources to explain our research objective: to understand the sustainability initiatives that the companyconducted, including *in loco* observations and interviews. The proposal was promptly accepted, and our data collection proceeded. One of the researchers carried out daily observations in the organization for four months, during which the graduate scheme’s case emerged as an exciting topic. Multiple talks, informal conversations, corridor chats, coffee-break gatherings, and private events (e.g. birthday parties and celebrations) were attended. Those experiences were chronologically documented in a 200-page Microsoft Word document.

Figure 3 - Types of data collected in 2018

Data sources	Specification of collected data
Ethnographic observations	**From Oct. 2018 to Jan. 2019** 4 months of observations – conducted in the human resources depatment. 200 pages of daily notes.
Interviews	**From Jan. 2018 to Dec. 2018** Number of interviews: 73 **Roles:** - Interns (3 interviews) - Analysts (23 interviews) - Consultants (25 interviews) - Trainees (12 interviews) - Executives (10 interviews) **Total**: 83 hours of interviews From 20 to 120 minutes
Documents	**From 2010 to 2018:** - Internal GS magazine 2010 – 23 pages - Internal GS magazine 2012 – 36 pages - Internal GS magazine 2014 – 37 pages - Internal GS magazine 2015 – 17 pages **Selected internal news from 2016 to 2018:** 303 pages
Online materials	**GS website:** - Website for the 2016 selection process - Website for the 2018 selection process **Videos:** - 10 short videos (average of 3 minutes) with managers, trainees from the 2016 cohort, and trainees from previous cohorts.

GS: Graduate Scheme

During our interactions with organizational members from different departments, 73 semi-structured interviews took place. Questions covered topics regarding the selection process and trainees' related experiences and perceptions. When interviewing trainees, we asked why they decided to apply for graduate schemes, including Globalcar's, the promises the organization made, whether their expectations were met, and how they responded to unmet promises where relevant. Surprisingly, many interviewees voiced frustrations even before we asked them directly, pointing out several inconsistencies between what the company promised and what was being delivered. They also expressed their frustration over how the organization was dealing with their concerns.

This evidence was complemented by material produced by the HR department to advertise the program. Ten videos featuring Globalcar managers and trainees have been available on the project website since 2018. The videos promote the "advantages" of the project (e.g. the job-rotation scheme, the self-development opportunity, the "prestige" of being part of Globalcar, and even the experience of living in the neighborhood of the company). We also collected available editions of the magazines produced annually for the graduate scheme (from 2010 to 2015). These publications provided important insights into the program's development over time.

Data analysis

As is typical in a qualitative case study, we reorganized our analysis several times (Langley et al., 2013). We moved from "thick descriptions" of our lived situations at the company, interviews, and news reported internally by Globalcar's communication department, to a more analytical framework. For clarity, our data analysis is summarized in five steps (Figure 4).

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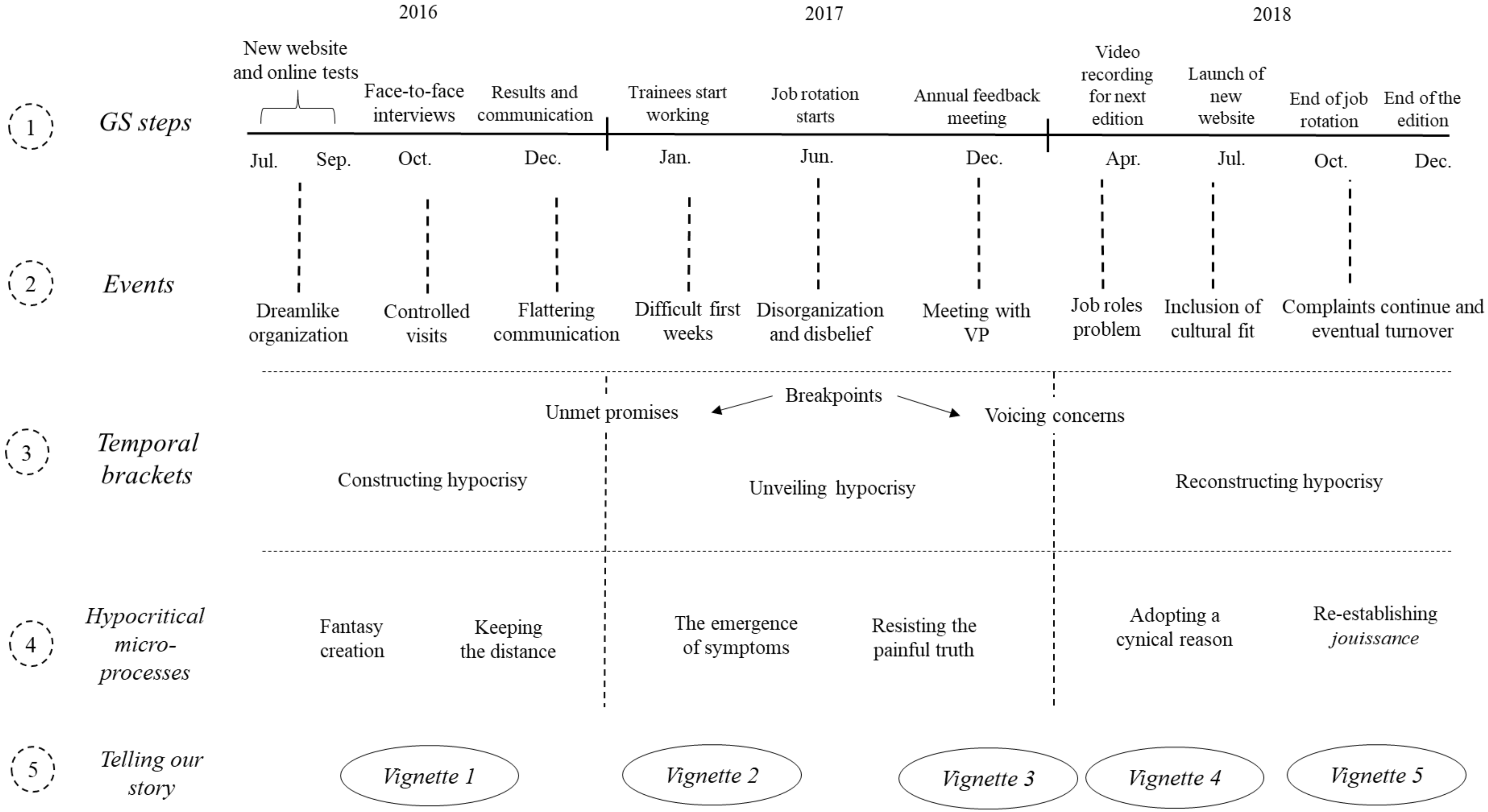
Figure 4 - Development of temporal brackets and vignettes



First, we used Nvivo software for initial open coding, breaking down our main story into minor—and more manageable—themes (e.g. selection process; unmet promises). In doing so, we rapidly recognized that being temporal in nature, our case has evolved over time. Essentially, our case is a *process* (Langley 1999). During our interviews, trainees referred to episodes "before" (e.g. during the selection process) and "now" (e.g. in the job rotation scheme), while the scheme's managers emphasized "past" and "future" cohorts of the program. We then created a timeline with the main project's steps, considering the 2016 cohort of trainees with whom we had direct contact (finishing the program in 2018) and the team responsible for their selection (Figure 4 – 1 – GS steps).

Second, we complemented the timeline with the main events from our data, summarizing into clusters the codes we had created in our software analysis. These occasions were spread over the timeframe of the 2016 session of the project. For instance, "controlled visits" was a group of codes that summarized a critical selection process event that occurred in October 2016 (Figure 4 – 2 – Events).

Third, with the eclectic data (face-to-face and online relationships between candidates/trainees and the company), we decided to follow what Langley (1999) proposes as a "temporal bracketing" analytical approach. It involves the definition of clear, distinct phases of a process, with specific *mechanisms* sustaining each phase and breakpoints indicating the transition from one phase to another. We knew that the relationship between the trainees and the HR team changed during the project. Looking back at our timeline, we asked ourselves why and when things changed. We concluded that our main breakpoints were when promises were unfulfilled, and when employees began voicing their concerns, symbolizing the shift from one period to another. Subsequently, we identified three distinct stages that indicate the construction, unveiling, and reconstruction of hypocrisy (Figure 4 – 3 – Temporal brackets).

Fourth, we considered several theoretical explanations for our findings that would allow us a more dynamic perspective of hypocrisy. Lacan's ideas in organization studies (Harding, 2007; Kenny, 2012; Kenny et al., 2020) seemed useful for capturing a subjective side of hypocrisy that could enrich our research. Following previous studies, we mapped the core signifiers of our case, i.e., the HR team (the VP; Karen, the manager; and Sara, the analyst). We analyzed our stages again, paying close attention to the communication between the HR team and the trainees, the choice of terms and sequence of events, with the understanding that such discourses reflect the symbolic order (Kenny, 2012). The discrepancies in their accounts were beneficial, as they helped us understand the evolution of the HR team-trainees relationship.

By revisiting the various stages, we could further map points of connection between data and theory that we term "hypocritical micro-processes" using the psychoanalytical concepts of fantasy and symptoms. By the end of the third stage, when hypocrisy is rebuilt, a new selection occurs, meaning that events and interactions can co-occur cyclically. This overlap of training periods of the project led us to realize that current trainees, albeit dissatisfied, were central to the reconstruction of hypocrisy, since they participated in commercial pieces and videos promoting the scheme. We then resorted to Sloterdijk's concept of cynical reason, which helped us make sense of this part of our data (Figure 4 – 4 – Hypocritical micro-processes).

Finally, to present our results, we opted for a narrative strategy (Langley 1999), using our data to create detailed stories. We crafted five sequential vignettes (Reay et al., 2019) that illustrate important episodes for our comprehension of how hypocrisy can be (re)built. In creating these vignettes, we used our observations as a foundation, complementing them with data from Globalcar's communication and interview excerpts. These narratives broadly reflect our phases, mechanisms, and breakpoints, thus allowing us to highlight our vivid experiences in the organization and insert the reader within our context (Figure 4 – 5 – Telling our story).

5.3 Findings

Our findings reveal that hypocrisy is created in the selection process and the alluring but remote fantasy of a dreamlike organization (Vignette 1). Once trainees start working, the unfulfilled promises begin to present symptoms, and hypocrisy is unveiled (Vignette 2). Trainees resist this uncomfortable disillusionment and decide to express their concerns to the HR team (Vignette 3), which, in turn, sets in motion a process of hypocrisy reconstruction. Involving trainees in cynical reasoning (Vignette 4), the new cohort of the program re-establishes *jouissance*, finally granting the cynical fantasy its perpetuation (Vignette 5). We detail this pattern through our vignettes, which are followed by an analysis of the micro-processes involved in the (re)construction of hypocrisy.

Constructing hypocrisy

The HR team constructs a compelling image of Globalcar, seeking to attract the "cream of the crop" of recent graduates. In doing so, a *fantasy* of rapid professional growth and personal development is carefully crafted, stimulating candidates' Imaginary. To succeed, however, a certain level of *distance* is necessary to instigate future trainees' professional desires. Vignette 1 offers data to support our analysis.

Vignette 1 – The distant fantasy – "Be a Globalcar trainee, move forward, transform yourself", says the cheerful VP of the HR department in one introductory video on the website for the program's 2018 scheme. The online selection process is the trainees' first point of contact. It contains all the necessary information about the organization, the recruitment timeline, and the selection criteria for the position. Perhaps most importantly, the website sets a measured tone conveying an impression of modernity, technological advancement, and meticulous care of its employees.

The protagonists of the other eight introductory videos are current trainees who describe different aspects of the program and their experience both in the organization and in the city where the factory is located. The videos' background displays efficient white robots moving rapidly and connecting different car parts. They display the most modern installations of the factory. The website homepage features hashtags and impactful sentences and words, such as "be part of the new Globalcar", "development", and "learning". The VP continues:

> *Trainees will be developed. Our job-rotation scheme is a unique opportunity. The company needs young and diverse professionals to continue its modern and agile legacy, and trainees will have frequent access to human resources and managers.*

For candidates, the experience of acquiring a holistic view of the fragmented vehicle production process is appealing. The promise of job rotation—as a privilege nearly exclusive to trainees—is extensively advertised throughout the rigorous and lengthy six-month selection process. The large assessment center narrows the field from the 20,000 initial applicants to just 50 candidates. Shortlisted individuals are invited to the factory for final rounds of meetings with managers and participation in group dynamics in a carefully orchestrated trip. One subtle but revealing gesture is the pre-authorization of candidates' names at the factory's main entrance to prevent any delay in their activities. Candidates are then immediately picked up at the entrance by car and taken directly to their destination. Most other visitors are not offered this privilege, instead being forced to either wait at the entrance or walk a long distance, past outdated and noisy areas of the plant. Since their experience within the organization is extremely controlled, candidates are kept entirely unaware of the company's functioning and the not-so-modern side of Globalcar.

Of the 50 shortlisted candidates, only 10 are chosen. From that point, the organization then engages in flattering communications with them. The consecration of the fantasy of "exceptional trainees" for the 2018 graduate scheme occurred in a strategic management meeting. An introductory video containing trainees' profiles, academic backgrounds, and future departments was presented to 300 top managers. As the future leaders of this modern and agile organization, trainees were also invited to this meeting, which most other employees had never had the chance to attend. The general feeling at the meeting was positive, especially because trainees were still unfamiliar with the daily routines of Globalcar.

Unveiling hypocrisy

In our analysis, we noticed that once the trainees start working for the organization and realize that the promises made to them are not being fulfilled, certain *symptoms* of that awareness of hypocrisy begin to emerge. These symptoms reveal the truth of Globalcar. Bureaucracy is the rule and trainees are regular employees, after all. Such disparities between the promised organization and what trainees actually face constitute evidence of hypocrisy. The company is not practicing what it preaches. At this point, trainees still *resist* accepting this painful truth. Vignette 2 offers supporting data for the unmet promises and the emergence of symptoms, while Vignette 3 explains how trainees voice their concerns.

Vignette 2 – Unmet promises and emergence of symptoms – "*It is a huge reality check when we first arrive here. You believe this is one of the most modern companies in the world. We produce cars [...], but they take so much time analyzing and approving everything that things get lost."* These are the comments of a marketing trainee, Yoko[3], recalling her first impressions about the company and the program. Like all the trainees in her cohort, she had just finished her undergraduate degree at one of the most prestigious universities.

By this stage, the trainees discover the bureaucratic side of Globalcar that was impossible to observe during the selection process. The first few weeks are particularly frustrating, and it is common to see trainees without workstations or the equipment or

[3] "Yoko" is a pseudonym. All names of employees and trainees are are fictional.

instructions required for their duties. Administrative processes take days, HR support disappears, and access to fundamental elements such as identity cards involves an incredibly complex and inefficient process. First, the trainees visit a specific department to obtain an ID number that grants access to the intranet. Then they line up outside the office of the employee responsible for this task, who only works from 2 to 4 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday. Given this limited availability, employees often wait for at least 30 minutes in an uncovered area. In a tropical country where organizations insist on formal attire, each minute in the sun is uncomfortable. Trainees must then request office equipment (e.g. a phone and computer) from a different department. Each step requires the manager's approval and further verification from the IT department on when, or whether, they would have the capacity to fulfill the demands.

The trainees realize that Globalcar, the dream organization, is gradually transforming into a nightmare. Linda, a logistics trainee, unburdens her dissatisfaction:

> *Last week they told me we would have an audit from the housekeeping subunit. We had to take everything from our desks, pretend we are extremely tidy for nothing. My chair was broken. I did not have a lamp on my desk. I have been working in this condition for over a month. I have called the subunit for repair, but nobody replied, and then they told me that I should be prepared for an audit. They are not even prepared for us to work here. We do not have [proper] working conditions. Sometimes I arrive home and cannot believe this is happening.*

These small inconveniences compound the trainees' frustration, revealing a Globalcar that is far from what they expected. "There are many separate elements that, when viewed together, become this chaos [at Globalcar]", summarizes Patricia, a finance trainee. Problems are even more traumatic when core elements of the program are also disappointing, such as the widely advertised job-rotation scheme.

Each trainee is assigned to a different department at Globalcar, and managers are responsible for determining which departments the trainees should rotate to, according to the relevance to their final roles. Within the first 12 months of the program, trainees are expected to have a broad overview and experience of the organization's operations. In practice, however, trainees change departments without clear objectives and duties, and it is common for them to go days without job assignments. Yoko, for example, was told by her superior to visit 18 different departments. She comments: "Every week or two, I was in a different place. While some departments were very interested in explaining their routines, others had no clue about what to do with me."

Trainees feel that their potential is being wasted because the organization does not seem to appreciate how "important" they are in terms of their potential contributions to the company. Sometimes they are not remembered at all. Trainees might return to their initially assigned departments and find that there is no available role for them because managers have "forgotten" that they would return after several months of job rotation. Thus, the trainees' first weeks are a revelation, plagued by emerging and gradual breaches that reveal the *symptoms* of the firm's hypocrisy. This is when they decide to voice their concerns.

Vignette 3 – Voicing concerns. Trainees in the 2016 cohort created a *WhatsApp* group as soon as they started the program so that they could share relevant information and keep in touch. However, it rapidly evolved into an escape route from their often dull and empty routines at the factory. Through the group, trainees discussed the problems they faced at Globalcar and their shared frustration about company's unfulfilled promises to them.

Carla, an engineering trainee, was especially disappointed because she and seven other trainees had been classified as analysts despite having been initially promised engineering roles. The program coordinator informed them that "engineering roles were under review". Carla explains:

> *I believe the main problem is the lack of transparency and organization… They said they are reviewing the whole engineer role description, and that is why they cannot*

consider us as engineers. They had 1.5 years to solve that. They could have told us something. Instead, they let us believe it would be possible, which is tremendously disrespectful.

The protracted imbroglio around the engineering role is a recurrent topic in their *WhatsApp* conversations. Tired of Globalcar's true dynamics, trainees start expressing their frustrations whenever they can, in a desperate attempt to improve their experience. Perhaps the most emblematic example is the meeting with the VP of HR to evaluate the program after the first year. A trainee from the 2016 cohort raises questions about salaries and roles while underscoring her dissatisfaction. The VP quickly replies that "it is neither the time nor place for such queries" and that "salaries and roles will be approved by the end of the year". However, when the year ends, there is no change. What trainees thought could be an opportunity to make their voices heard was turned against them. Once hypocrisy is evident in plain sight and trainees' concerns become obvious, the HR team refuses to address them, and, far from being offered solutions, the trainees are framed as the problem instead.

Reconstructing hypocrisy

We argue that trainees violate an unspoken organizational norm by questioning Globalcar's hypocrisy and identifying the culprits. Managers then destroy trainees' fantasies and their enjoyment, and the act of speaking up about concerns changes trainees' and the HR team's perceptions of each other. From our data, Vignette 4 illustrates the beginning of a renewed relationship between both actors marked by the emergence of a cynical reason that reconstructs hypocrisy despite its blatant inconsistencies. Vignette 5 explains how the program ensures continuity by using current trainees as accomplices to restore its fantasies, and the *jouissance* derived from it.

Vignette 4 – The cynical reason. Susan, the program head, had neither the time nor the will to talk to trainees, as evidence by the fact that she never answered her phone and ignored trainees' e-mails. Although her schedule was apparently too busy to accommodate them, she was commonly seen gossiping with other managers in the department's kitchen. Her avoidance of trainees, therefore, seems intentional.

Karen, Susan's team member, is responsible for dealing with trainees' concerns, even though she has limited power and influence within the organization. In one of our meetings, she portrays a view of the graduate scheme that is markedly distinct from that advertised during the selection process:

> *Our graduate scheme is different from what you see in other companies. Unlike theirs, ours can't guarantee managerial positions after its completion. You know, we are very rigid and bureaucratic. People work here for years in the same position. I believe candidates sometimes think they will arrive here and become a manager in two years.*

Her statements and tone suggest that she views a rapid rise up the Globalcar managerial ladder as an unrealistic expectation. Indeed, although the company does not directly promise career advancement to its trainees, it is implied when the VP invites candidates to "develop themselves" and to "move forward", in becoming Globalcar's new leaders. Such vague statements give Karen room to portray a scenario vastly unlike what the company committed to, displaying a level of cynicism not anticipated by the trainees. At the same time, the trainees now see the previously supportive HR turning against them.

Karen finally admits the limitations of the project. Even so, she is unwilling to recognize them as problems. Instead, her discourse invalidates trainees' complaints. Commenting on their desperation to expose the program's failures, she states, "They have no idea of who they are or what they're doing in the organization. None of us [employees] would ever ask the VP about roles and salaries in a meeting like that, for example." Other senior employees share her opinion. Arrogance, distance from other employees, and immaturity are characteristics commonly attributed to the trainees.

Vignette 5 – Re-establishing jouissance. Even though trainees feel concerned about their image, in the context of a developing Latin American country, they cannot just quit the organization. Many of them have come from poorer parts of the country, entered long-term tenancy contracts, and asked their partners to make life changes to accommodate their new jobs. Thus, most of them are forced to persevere in a dream that has long since become a nightmare.

The HR team seems to be aware of their powerful position and uses trainees' complaints to justify the need for a tougher selection process. Karen mentions that in each session of the program, they try to improve and amend the limitations they notice:

> *For the 2018 trainee cohort, we are improving our selection process. We now include an online cultural fit form, to select only employees that are aligned with our values. For example, as you know, we are very slow, sometimes bureaucratic, and we need professionals that understand that.*

The idea of raising the standards for candidates even higher comes from the conclusion that current trainees are not well adapted to Globalcar's organizational culture. They want something that the company cannot provide. Hence, the solution is to ensure that the next cohort is "in sync with" Globalcar as it is (e.g. sluggish and bureaucratic). Managers reject the project's failures, whilst at the same time using trainees' testimonials and images to guarantee the perpetuation of the program. They are learning from trainees' mistakes while invalidating them as professionals, hoping to hire "more resilient" individuals in the future. In Karen's words:

> *We like professionals that show resilience, who understand that the company is not as fast as others. We want candidates that are OK with that. This is a substantial*

improvement we are making in this training period as we noticed trainees sometimes do not understand how things work here.

Consequently, managers ascribe their failures to the trainees in a cynical dynamic in which trainees also participate, even if unconsciously, when they are asked to record videos exploring the benefits of Globalcar, which will soon be available on the new selection process website. Moreover, until 2015, the company produced a printed magazine dedicated to the program and with a smiling cohort of trainees on its cover. The pages are filled with hopeful messages and the positive experiences they have had so far, even though there is an obvious dissonance between the trainees' reality and the magazine's content.

From the perspective of the HR team, the company is not out of step with reality; rather, the trainees' are at fault for not conforming. In precise terms, this reaction constitutes a side effect of the "improvements" the company adopts for future iterations of the program. In a vicious cycle in which trainees are chosen, praised, invalidated, used as examples to show the next cohort and then discarded, the graduate scheme is perpetuated, with a selection process that seeks perfect modern professionals to paradoxically conform to an old, bureaucratic, and slow organization. Eventually, most trainees leave the organization, as illustrated in Table 4, which was prepared by one of the 2016 cohort's trainees. Nevertheless, the project continues.

Table 4 - Turnover rates of Globalcar's graduate scheme in 2018

Cohort	**Total**	**Still at Globalcar**	**Retention**
2008	19	7	37%
2010	17	4	24%
2012	23	9	39%
2014	18	5	28%
Total	77	25	**32%**

5.4 The analysis of micro-processes in the (re)construction of hypocrisy

During our fieldwork, we struggled to understand how the team responsible for the graduate scheme managed to keep it running amidst such harsh criticism from both trainees and other employees. Trainees felt strongly that the company was not carrying out what it publicizes, whereas employees believed that the trainees were unprepared and inadequate. Meanwhile, the managing team was already organizing the next selection process. We came to understand that hypocrisy is much more dynamic than previously acknowledged, involving the processes of construction, unveiling, and reconstruction. We further identify breakpoints that signal the movement between stages, as well as micro-processes that reinforce the core elements of each stage. Figure 5 summarizes our main propositions.

Figure 5 - The (re)construction of hypocrisy

	Constructing	Unveiling	Reconstructing
Hypocritical micro-processes	**Fantasy creation** Hypocrisy is structured around promises of a dream-like organization that fulfils the Imaginary of individuals.	**The emergence of symptoms** A closer look reveals cracks in the wall, and individuals realise the organisation is not what was promised.	**Adopting a cynical reason** Those in the know are in error, and employees' concerns are used against them. A cynical reason is used to reconstruct hypocrisy, involving trainees and the human resources team.
	Keeping the distance Necessary to keep appearances. A certain level of distance hides hypocrisy in plain sight and stimulates individuals' desires.	**Resisting the painful truth** The realisation of being mere employees is painful; it breaks individuals' Imaginary and scratches their Real.	**Restabilising *jouissance*** Minor changes are implemented to guarantee the reconstruction of hypocrisy and the surplus it brings. A new fantasy emerges, restarting the cycle.

Unmet promises

Voicing concerns

Stage 1 – Constructing hypocrisy

Fantasy creation

The appealing discourse in Vignette 1 highlights the fantasy crafting of a dream organization where trainees can be much more than mere employees. Trainees, in their Imaginary order, strive to become leaders who advance towards the top management level because of their presumed special nature. Such a fantasy is *collective*, as it advertises a dream position in an unstable and informal employment environment in which anyone could be the next "special" one. However, a fantasy also carries a *personal* dimension. In practice, Globalcar's fantasy shapes young applicants' desires. The HR team tells future trainees what they *should* want as a condition of the fantasy, being arguably an agent of the Symbolic—the voice of the big Other—teaching trainees what to desire: "the managerial position" and "the job-rotation scheme". As a reflection in their Imaginary, trainees want to be *recognized* by others as leading and special professionals, which reveals that their desires are ultimately coded externally in the Symbolic.

Keeping the distance

For a fantasy to be maintained in the construction of hypocrisy, a certain level of distance between the signifier and those who desire is necessary. Vignette 1 highlights two crucial methods to achieve that condition: (i) an impersonal selection process avoiding face-to-face interactions and (ii) the use of visual tools, such as videos filmed in modern installations with testimonials from current trainees, generating a promise of a modern and agile organization. Interestingly, distance allows the HR team to control the narrative they create about the company, but it also lets applicants construe a personal relation to Globalcar's fantasy so that they could be the next protagonist of the prestigious program. Since candidates are kept unaware of possible problems in the organization, they cannot see that their experience is actually being manipulated. At this point, the function of the fantasy is complete as it matches with individuals' desires. They believe in the veracity of the firm's promises, the videos, and their experiences of the factory.

Stage 2 – Unveiling hypocrisy

The emergence of symptoms

When the distance is no longer possible, individuals start noticing gradual breaches that expose hypocrisy. Here the symptoms are still vague, interpreted as minor contradictions in the hypocritical narrative. Vignette 2 illustrates that the trainees' first weeks in Globalcar are a revelation, plagued by emerging problems and disappointments that are initially isolated. When compounded, however, small cracks demonstrate what the organization desires to be, but is not. Contrary to the public image, Globalcar itself is not an agile and modern company. The HR team's hypocritical narrative is a wishful statement, intentionally designed to ensure the trainees' collective participation.

Moreover, it becomes apparent that trainees are not indispensable to Globalcar, given that they voice their concerns in Vignettes 3 and 4, only to be undermined by the HR team. The trainees finally realize that they are disposable, and such symptoms scratch the surface of their Real. Their fundamental desire is controverted. They will not become managers after the program's completion after all. The fantasy of rapid professional ascendancy is then called into question.

Resisting the painful truth

Gradually, the truth that symptoms hide becomes visible and confronts trainees' desires, and the reality is palpably shared in multiple everyday interactions. Yet, arguably, as they come to terms with the truth about Globalcar, they also resist accepting it because admitting the Real is painful. Trainees share their frustrations among themselves, which help build a support network that they expect to be extended when they present their concerns to the organization. However, by challenging Globalcar's hypocrisy, they violate an unspoken norm. The VP and his team are responsible for destroying their fantasies and the enjoyment they bring, but daring to question Globalcar's managers will not bring about positive change in the organization. The trainees do not merely violate a particular unwritten rule. They far overstep the boundaries of their roles by exposing inconsistencies, which are then used by the HR team to reconstruct hypocrisy.

Stage 3 – Reconstructing hypocrisy

Adopting a cynical reason

Vignette 4 portrays the beginning of the emergence of the cynical reasoning that is central in the reconstruction of hypocrisy. The HR team feels threatened in their own conception and subjective relationship with Globalcar, as trainees verbalize their dissatisfaction. Recognizing failure would imply allowing the Real of Globalcar to be acknowledged by its managers. The problematic consequence of the collapse of the company's public image would reveal that it is not what it professes to be. The HR team, as the signifier, begins to view trainees as unfit for Globalcar's fantasy, and further labels them as immature and unprofessional. According to the management, these trainees should have never stopped believing in the fantasy, nor dared to question the opportunity that Globalcar has given them: 'a steady job in a wonderful organization'.

However, beyond the team's attempt to hide the chinks in the armor of the organization's fantasy, trainees are also participants in the cynical reasoning. As Vignette 5 points out, although aware that the scheme is flawed and that their reputations are in question because of their transgressive behavior, trainees still take part in Globalcar's activities. Cynical reasoning is thus interdependent. Globalcar's managers can only identify the breaks in the scheme's fantasy because trainees expose them, and it is only as a result of this knowledge that managers can work towards concealing the flaws, also pushing trainees to participate in the cynical reasoning. In sum, it is trainees' *transgression* that triggers the emergence of cynical reasoning. In turn, it is this cynicism that causes re-establishment of the loop of *jouissance* the scheme brings to managers.

Re-establishing jouissance

What moves the HR team is the search for *jouissance*—the surplus enjoyment that they benefit from when fostering the illusion of the firm being agile and modern. Re-establishing jouissance is, therefore, an essential part of reconstructing hypocrisy. Despite the suffering of the current cohort, the HR team wants the graduate scheme to continue. However, in order to do so, they must rely on recruiting new believers, as Vignette 5 explains. The new stage in the selection process aims to guarantee that new trainees have faith in the *words* of the organization and do not reflect on its possible failures. To ensure that future trainees experience "joy" in pursuing their desire to work in an "agile and modern firm", Globalcar persists in selling itself as the fantasy of professional realization. The company keeps this lie alive by further tightening the selection criteria for new trainees, reinforcing the perceived exclusiveness of its program. Only those who are resilient and willing to bear the costs of Globalcar's false representation of its own organizational reality can be part of the firm and worthy of rapidly becoming managers in a country plagued by under-employment and job precarity. Hypocrisy is again reconstructed, necessarily hidden in plain sight during the new selection process. Current trainees can now leave the organization, as their function within the cynical reasoning context is fulfilled.

5.5 Discussion

Our study's contributions are two-fold. We bring a dynamic perspective to corporate hypocrisy literature by substantiating it with psychoanalytical concepts. At the same time, we contribute to psychoanalytic organizational studies by identifying how hypocrisy is a (re)constructed fantasy via cynical reason, exacerbated in specific sociopolitical-economic contexts (a peripheral capitalist organization, in our case).

Hypocrisy as a processual and intersubjective phenomenon

This study responds to recent calls for a more dynamic perspective of corporate hypocrisy (Christensen, Morsing, et al., 2019; Wagner et al., 2019) by demonstrating that there is an alternative way of understanding it beyond the idea of an entirely rational choice (Brunson 1989) or a mere perception of stakeholders (Wagner et al., 2009). The psychoanalytical perspective helped us capture the subjectivities involved in the intricate employee-organization relationship and develop a process that explains more complex cases of persistent hypocrisy. Three main implications emerge from our understanding of hypocrisy as an intersubjective process vis-à-vis agency, scope, and consequences.

In terms of agency, leaders (representing their organizations) might have the strategic intent of developing "aspirational talk" (Christensen et al., 2013) or even deliberately building a hypocritical façade (Cho et al., 2015). However, those who trigger this initial talk-action dissociation might not anticipate the myriad of aspects that are involved in theirs and others' (un)conscious desires and fantasies. As our case indicates, the perceptions of unmet promises are collective, as a broader contextual wish for successful careers. Nevertheless, they are also individual, as each employee experiences specific frustrations that are compounded in their overall negative evaluation of the project. These identifications vary over time and place. People mature, undergo new experiences, and find novel ways of justifying their position and presence in organizations.

As individuals change in their identifications with the Symbolic, so does hypocrisy, with renewed burning desires and fantasies that might lead individuals (be they leaders or employees) to sustain hypocrisy, even if unconsciously. Hence, by arguing that hypocrisy might not be entirely rational, our study also questions the agency of organizations and employees in this process. After all, are Globalcar's leaders entirely conscious of the actual situation? Are trainees aware that they are also practising hypocrisy? Of course, this does not exempt the company and its leaders for their actions in any way, but these questions arose during our investigation. Although a conclusive answer is considered beyond this paper's purpose, it can be said that hypocrisy is a rather volatile and contagious entity. Once someone lets it out into the atmosphere, it inebriates those surrounding it, dissipating, at least partially, in its control and repercussions.

Regarding scope, we describe the idea of hypocrisy as an interactive process that integrates individuals' subjectivities derived from their sociocultural context (e.g. a stable job; rapid career progression). Hypocrisy is much broader than specific events of organizational life (Christensen, Morsing, et al., 2019). We found that what is ephemeral is not hypocrisy *per se*, but its acknowledgment. In practice, our perspective suggests that attempts to "resolve hypocrisy" might be symptoms of broader contradictions between stakeholders' desires and reality, involving extra-organizational factors (e.g. social status, previous experiences, international expectations). For instance, although many HR practices tend to glorify "Generation X, Z, Millennials" and the need to prepare organizations for the new wave of employees (e.g. KPMG, 2017; Prossack, 2018), it is more common for employees to adapt to organizations despite promised career development and talent management opportunities being unfulfilled (Gill, 2018). Hypocrisy is concealed in such discourses as a pervasive force, being more widespread than previously acknowledged.

In terms of consequences, a processual view of hypocrisy expands previous studies arguing that it might have adverse impacts on both organizations (Carlos & Lewis, 2018; Greenbaum et al., 2015; Wagner et al., 2019) and employees, who eventually resign (Scheidler et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2019). We agree with the overall negative effects of hypocrisy, which can still be maintained by specific groups' interests and desires, since organizations are not unitary. Likewise, we show that some trainees might indeed quit, but mainly when hypocrisy is already reconstructed. The motivation for leaving the company is the ongoing breach of promises, rather than a single isolated incidence of perceived hypocrisy. This outcome is significant because the continuous acknowledgment of hypocrisy seems much more impactful in this decision than an isolated case. Further research could examine this aspect, exploring the different stages of development of hypocrisy and its consequences.

Cynical fantasies sustaining hypocrisy and capitalism

We expand on previous critical studies that identified fantasy as a crucial element underlying the prevalence of exploitative and submissive practices in organizations (Vidaillet & Gamot, 2015). We do so by identifying the development of cynical reasoning as the central mechanism that people use when avoiding their encounter with the terrifying Real (Arnaud & Vidaillet, 2018).

Organization scholars contend that fantasies provide a sense of direction to individuals' quest for recovering their wholesomeness, yet when these new fantasies start proving unable to recover the joy of their Imaginary, they are replaced with new ones (Bloom, 2016; Kenny et al., 2020). While this is true under the Lacanian organizational framework, the argument is endogenous because it identifies neither the mechanism explaining the fantasy replacement process nor how the context plays a vital role in it. In attempting to fill this gap in the literature, our study suggests that fantasy reconstruction co-occurs through the joint development of cynical reasoning entangled with sociopolitical discourses.

Accordingly, capitalist discourses in a peripheral country coalesce with hypocritical practices' conformation and their reconstruction via *cynicism* (Vanheule, 2016). Such discourses push individuals to produce "at full capacity", being presented to them as "completeness and self-sufficiency" (Bloom, 2016; Arnaud & Vidaillet, 2017), also setting individuals on a journey of sacrifice in which they must either comply with the exploitative practices of the organization or be expelled from it (Vanheule, 2016). Cynicism plays a crucial role because it entails a degree of self-preservation and search for completion (Sloterdijk, 1984). It leads individuals to “accept” or “adhere” to ideological discourses they do not believe in, deflating emancipatory collective action, ultimately making them “bear” exploitation (Bloom, 2016; Fleming & Spicer, 2003).

Adopting a cynical reason thus indicates that individuals recognize the hypocrisy that capitalist discourses construe in organizations and their false premises. They persist in them, nonetheless. A cynical reason allows individuals to resolve perceived inconsistencies and re-establishes their perpetual quest for wholesomeness (Driver, 2009). Cynicism sustains and molds the fantasy according to the occasion and the context in which it is formulated. In the case of Globalcar, the managers adopt a cynical reason because they feel secure in their ability to attract highly competent young employees. As talented and promising graduates keep applying in a steady stream, managers can continue to be cynical and impervious to trainees' complaints while still securing a new cohort in the upcoming selection processes. Similarly, although trainees know the truth behind Globalcar's façade and eventually leave the organization, they actively participate in the recrafting of a cynical fantasy that allows the hypocrisy to continue. Important to note that similar cynical behavior is unexpected in different contexts, such as Germany, a highly coordinated market economy with stricter labor regulations and a stable job market. There, other forms of cynicism might take place, explaining the perpetuation of fantasies in ongoing hypocritical situations.

In short, our study expands the limited understanding of cynicism in organizations. Thus far, cynical reasoning is deemed as exclusively applying to the “employees” (Fleming and Spicer, 2003). However, we demonstrate that it is a co-production process involving various organization stakeholders, elements, and discourses from the sociopolitical context, and of course, employees' desires, fantasies, and expectations. Furthermore, this study confirms that cynical reasoning remains central to the reconstruction of hypocrisy by making it more bearable, or credible, hence facilitating the abandonment of possible substantial changes and/or emancipatory action.

Concluding remarks

This study offers a fresh perspective on organizational hypocrisy. We acknowledge that like any new approach, it has limitations. Even so, it presents compelling opportunities for future research. With regard to the former, we must again recognize that this research captures an angle of social reality from our positionality, being heavily influenced by our personal context, employment background, and views of the world. Moreover, the theories used herein to formulate a novel perspective on hypocrisy, and even our analysis, represent one approach to explain hypocrisy. Future studies might expand, refute, or examine other angles of hypocrisy that we—within our limited view—did not explore in this paper. For instance, we realize that studies on organizational bullshit (e.g. Christensen, Kärreman, & Rasche, 2019) could offer many insights into the aspects discussed here. Also, more specific literature on career development or talent management (e.g. O'Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2019) could offer insights into our case from an HR perspective. However, given the difficulty of articulating many ideas in such a short paper, we opted not to delve into these tempting roads. On the latter, by showing the complexity and pervasiveness of hypocrisy, and how it hinders change, we offer a new angle of research into the materialization of hypocritical practices in other aspects of organizational dynamics (e.g. human resources, project management) and how it persists over time. Scholars might also analyze how hypocrisy, via fantasy construction and cynical reasoning, shape new organizational structures (e.g. CSR, marketing, and relationship with governments). Future research might also address other well-known word-deed disparities, such as corruption, environmental scandals, and failure to incorporate green policies.

5.6 Moving beyond the everyday tensions of hypocrisy

This case brought to light the tensions within a strategic project at Globalcar. My daily accounts allowed me to move from the unusual situation of a program in which nobody was satisfied into the familiar (re)construction of hypocrisy. As I understood the dynamics of the relationship between managers and trainees, I could explain the repercussions of unresolved tensions in the organization. Hypocrisy appeared as a consequence of the continuation of this tension. Instead of resolving the problems, the exposure of the tensions triggered the (re)construction of a cynical fantasy. As a result, the successful formation of future Globalcar leaders was doubtful. This process is somewhat irrational, and it involves intersubjective identifications that stir desires and fantasies.

To explain the persistence of such sustainability tensions, it is important to realize the subjectivities influencing them. For instance, we observed that the tensions, in this case, moved from latent to salient. This occurs when organizational members acknowledge and then choose to either manage or dismiss tensions. The latter leads to a vicious cycle with the dominance of the economic dimension over societal and environmental ones (Joseph et al., 2020). In the case of Globalcar, it would mean that managers understood the tensions surrounding their graduate scheme. Their apparent dismissal of any problems is explained by economic interests, such as short-term reputation (after all, the scheme is still competitive and attracts several candidates).

However, this is not the entire picture, as fantasies and desires also play a role. Both employees and trainees have wishes that materialize in the continuation of the project. Being recognized as responsible or as a participant of such a prestigious project, for example, might be part of the fantasy that stimulates them to continue insisting on tensions and failing projects. Consequently, tensions remain, not only because of rational economic reasons, but also because of intersubjective identifications. The everyday organizational activities thus allowed me to move beyond a purely economic explanation for the continuity of a hypocritical practice and demonstrated the need to consider such an intersubjective perspective when understanding sustainability tensions.

This is especially true in a growing online post-pandemic world in which interactions can be more easily manipulated to reflect a more favorable angle of ourselves. The fantasy of "professional success" is stronger than ever, and the second case shows the centrality of online interactions in perpetuating that fantasy. However, the literature on how tensions play out in this virtual environment is scarce, especially from the point of view of employees who are already marginalized in face-to-face interactions. How do employees adapt to a hostile environment in which tensions are salient and unresolved with a growing overlap between online and face-to-face interactions?

In the third and final article of this thesis, I explore the tensions emerging from the case of stigmatized employees and the overlapping relationships between online and face-to-face interactions. My firsthand experience at Globalcar showed me that a perspective that does not consider online interactions can be incomplete, as many face-to-face interactions proceed or co-occur with online conversations. While Globalcar focuses its diversity initiatives on the promotion of women executives and takes advantage of the pervasiveness of social network sites, it remains insensitive to how the use of social media profiles for work purposes may adversely affect certain stigmatized minorities. Specifically, the employees who identify as LGBTQIA+ may not feel comfortable sharing with peers details about their non-workplace identities. This situation poses a research opportunity, as sexual minorities continue to be marginalized. Even though diversity is a growing trend in the corporate world, it often demands intricate structural changes and a careful and sensitive look at different groups of employees.

6. The Correspondent Behavior Cycle:
Managing Stigma when the Online and Offline Worlds Collide at Work[4]

I have nobody from the factory on my Instagram because one of my colleagues, who is also gay, had a public profile, and some other peers saw his pictures and were commenting, "Look at what this faggot is doing!"

The quoted employee works at Globalcar (a pseudonym), the Latin American subsidiary of a multinational car manufacturer. In such an atmosphere of bigotry, this employee is stigmatized. Like many other gay employees at Globalcar, he adopts measures at work and online so that his sexual orientation is not evident to his peers. Defined as an attribute that is discrediting in a particular context, stigma is initially related to some noticeable characteristics such as race, gender, or a physical disorder (Goffman, 1963). Today, stigma also encompasses the repudiation of less observable elements, including, for example, beliefs, religions, diseases, pregnancy—or sexual orientation (Jones & King, 2014).

Stigma can lead to several negative consequences for an employee: rejection, prejudice, loss of respect, lower pay, stress, and anxiety (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Clair et al., 2005; Jones & King, 2014). Additionally, it can result in increased turnover intentions (Cech & Rothwell, 2020) or even, in the case of stigmas that involve non-heteronormative behavior, being considered "less professional" (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Despite the steady growth of diversity initiatives in organizations (Flory, Leibbrandt, Rott, & Stoddard, 2021; Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006), discrimination and stigmatization cases on the basis of sexual orientation frequently occurs, as our initial quote highlights.

[4] Dr Thiago Coacci is the co-author of this paper. Thus, the text is mostly written in third-person plural (except for the specificities of data collection). As mentioned in the preface, the article is in the second round of revise and resubmit for publication at the Academy of Management Journal.

In such contexts, individuals with these “concealable stigmas” appraise possible contextual threats and opportunities (Bataille & Vough, 2020) and may try to integrate or segment their work and stigmatized identities (Follmer et al., 2020). The literature has extensively documented identity responses from stigmatized employees, ranging from attempting to embrace and integrate the stigmatized and work identities to completely “dodging” possible identity work (cf. Creed et al., 2010; DeJordy, 2008; Doldor & Atewologun, 2020; Lyons et al., 2020; Toyoki & Brown, 2014).

Though such studies have provided a comprehensive view on stigma management, they have surprisingly sidelined the role of social networking sites (SNSs), such as Facebook and Instagram, in the stigmatized employees’ identity work. By focusing almost exclusively on face-to-face relationships, stigma studies have provided little insight into how SNSs might have changed employees’ stigma management. This is problematic when we consider the ubiquity of such platforms in our lives and the challenges of compartmentalizing work and private matters online.

SNSs allow one to stay in touch with family, friends, and co-workers anywhere and anytime. They are also becoming powerful tools at work, serving as forums for discussion and showcasing corporate projects (Leonardi & Vaast, 2017; Treem & Leonardi, 2013). In this sense, SNSs are blurring the traditional boundaries between work and private spheres by grouping multiple audiences in a single virtual space, a situation known as “context collapse” (Vitak, 2012).

A few studies have explored the unfolding of this online coexistence in different aspects of work, highlighting strategies that employees use to manage their SNSs, as well as the possible consequences (e.g. Bareket-Bojmel et al., 2016; Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Vitak et al., 2012). To date, this research does not consider that specific groups of employees may behave and be affected differently, thus casting doubt on whether certain stigmatized groups, such as members of the LGBTQIA+ community, behave in the same way. For instance, a photo of a kiss between a man and a woman on Facebook might not have an impact on their workplace lives, but the same type of photograph of a gay couple may be less well received, especially given the prominence of heteronormativity within the idea of professionalism (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009; Speice, 2020; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). Moreover, SNSs allow employees to broadcast messages to a vast public at once with just the click of a mouse, meaning there might be as-yet unexplored destigmatization opportunities, or even consequences for the continuous, and sometimes gradual, "coming out" work that gay individuals perform (Sedgwick, 2008).

Whereas current theories on identity work and stigma management are quite limited in their considerations of SNSs, studies on SNSs and their impacts at work neglect possible complications that stigmas create. Therefore, we ask: *How do employees with concealable stigmas perform identity work in the interplay of the online and offline worlds at work?* To answer this question, we explore a qualitative case study based on observations (Joffe et al., 1996) and in-depth semi-structured interviews (Longhurst, 2009) with gay male professionals at Globalcar. Our approach allows us to move beyond previous research by looking at both SNSs and face-to-face behaviors, capturing the way the Internet integrates and constitutes our everyday lives.

A car manufacturer in Latin America provides the ideal context in which to study the management of gay identity in the workplace, as countries in the region are still dangerous places for members of the LGBTQIA+ community, despite the recent criminalization of homophobia in many of these countries (Grupo Gay da Bahia, 2018). Furthermore, the car industry has always been a male-dominated environment (Styhre, Backman, & Börjesson, 2005) in which heteronormativity is hegemonic (Wright, 2014) and generally perceived as an integral aspect of professionalism (Grey, 1998). Hence, our case has the potential to reveal many facets of situations that employees with concealable stigmas consider when interacting with peers face-to-face or online.

Our results reveal that employees conduct an initial analysis based on contextual threats and opportunities. They then adopt a dominant identity response, which we label "correspondent behavior". It consists of attempts to match face-to-face and online identity work on a continuum from integration to segmentation of work and stigmatized identities. This behavior is marked by tensions generated by SNSs. Rarely do they produce the consequences that employees intended, a situation that leads to reappraisals and adjustments in a continuous "correspondent behavior cycle".

Our study contributes to the literature on identity work and stigma management by uncovering a tricky identity response, the tensions and ambiguous outcomes that the Internet inevitably brings. Previous studies have assumed that online interactions do not change the way that stigmatized employees perform identity work. Contrarywise, we reveal that SNSs heavily influence how employees with concealable stigmas behave in their work-related interactions. By considering the insights emerging from social media studies (Cho, 2018; Hanckel, Vivienne, Byron, Robards, & Churchill, 2019), we demonstrate in our analysis that previous identity responses mapped by the literature (Doldor & Atewologun, 2020; Jones & King, 2014) are difficult to apply in a rapidly growing online world. Not only is there unpredictability of outcomes but also constant reappraisal of behaviors.

6.1 Literature Review

In this section, we define our central concepts, introduce the literature on identity work and stigma management, and identify the limitations we intend to explore in the present study, using various social media studies as support.

Identity and Identity Work

By the word "identity", we mean "the meanings that individuals attach reflexively to their selves as they seek to answer questions such as 'How shall I relate to others?' 'What shall I strive to become?'" (Brown, 2015, p. 2). Implicit in this definition are symbolic and dramaturgical performances (Goffman, 1963) through which an individual creates an identity. Consequently, one's identity is neither stable nor fixed but constructed over time through discourses and actions (Brown, 2015). It "appears to involve the discursive articulation of an ongoing iteration between social and self-definition" (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 301). In addition, the actors' shaping of their identities to "fit" a certain context is called identity work (Brown, 2015). Attempts to find coherence between self and social definitions are characterized by struggles and contradictions (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

Despite many divergent approaches to identity, it is widely acknowledged that individuals have multiple, interwoven identities (Bataille & Vough, 2020; Ramarajan, 2014). In our study, we adopt the idea, proposed by Ramarajan (2014), that multiple identities form an intrapersonal network where each node is an identity (such as gender, race, age, religion, or occupation), and the ties are the various relationships that bind them together.[5] According to this perspective, not all identities are activated at all times, and identity work can be used to reorganize the network, activating some connections and deactivating others.[6]

The analysis for a (re)organization of multiple identities is a cognitive appraisal based on the evaluation of possible contextual threats and opportunities (Bataille & Vough, 2020). An identity threat may be the risk of exposing or stressing a devalued identity, or limiting or preventing its enactment (Petriglieri, 2011). An identity opportunity is an "experience appraised as indicating a potential for growth in the value, meanings, or enactment of an

[5] There are many types of ties: conflicts, enhancement, and integration, but also power relations and temporal ties.
[6] In addition, identities are organized by hierarchy and salience—i.e., a person can assign different weights to their various identities and some may be more easily noticeable than others, even if unintentional.

identity" (Bataille & Vough, 2020: 10). For instance, stigmatized employees facing new jobs or daily interactions may perform a cognitive appraisal to determine whether to integrate or segment their work and stigmatized identities, accounting for various factors such as organizational support, relationships with peers, and general perceptions about their surroundings. Integration is the merging of identities so that they become connected and at least partially blurred, while segmentation is the creation of boundaries to separate or even hide identities (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010).

Although stigma management studies are not always explicitly linked to identity work, through the lens of such studies, we can interpret the many strategies some people use to mask their stigmatized identities (cf. Creed et al., 2010; Doldor & Atewologun, 2020; Toyoki & Brown, 2014). In our research, we adopt the terminology of "segmenting" and "integrating" the stigmatized and work identities, instead of "concealing" and "revealing" a stigma.

Identity Work to Integrate or Segment Identities

A growing body of literature seeks to map the complex process by which employees deal with concealable stigmas (cf. Follmer et al., 2020; Jones & King, 2014), placing major emphasis on identity responses and the consequences of integrating or segmenting stigmatized and work identities (Charoensap-Kelly, Mestayer, & Knight, 2020; Di Marco, Arenas, Hoel, & Munduate, 2020; Ragins, 2008; Stenger & Roulet, 2018). The literature often underscores identity work to *segment* identities, reflecting the tendency to focus on the possible threats stemming from cognitive appraisals (Bataille & Vough, 2020).

Precisely, in the case of gay employees, to fit into a particular work environment or industry (Stenger & Roulet, 2018; Styhre et al., 2005), they may try to alter their physical appearance, clothing, or mannerisms (Woods & Lucas, 1994; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). In other words, they may attempt to "pass" as a member of the hegemonic identity group and/or as a "professional" (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009; Speice, 2019). In more extreme cases, employees with stigmas may also adopt anti-social behaviors, distancing themselves from peers and superiors (Stenger & Roulet, 2018). Others may even invent details about their lives to divert attention from, or disguise, a stigmatized identity (Clair et al., 2005; Follmer et al., 2020; Jones & King, 2014).

Many of the above-mentioned tactics can also be employed in the opposite direction when gay employees perform a cognitive appraisal and see opportunities for an integration process. They may "test the waters" by signaling (Clair et al., 2005; Jones & King, 2014)—that is, speaking or behaving in ways that are commonly associated with the stigma in order to observe the reactions of others (Jones & King, 2014). They may completely embrace their stigmas (Doldor & Atewologun, 2020), opting to change their behaviors as little as possible. In addition, they may attempt to differentiate or normalize their stigmas at work (Clair et al., 2005; Jones & King, 2014) by consciously adopting the behaviors attributed to stigmatized identities, such as talking about their same-sex partners at work (Stenger & Roulet, 2018). Finally, some individuals may disclose their stigma to only a few selected peers (Ragins, 2008) or negotiate the meaning of their devalued identity to achieve acceptance or value (Lyons, Pek, & Wessel, 2017).

Integrating and segmenting identities is not as straightforward as commonly portrayed in the literature. Recent research indicates that some employees may adopt an ambivalent "double-think" movement in which problems with stigma are minimized at the micro-level, yet the broader negative evaluations of the identity are ignored (Doldor & Atewologun, 2020). In such cases, employees acknowledge the threats that the stigmatized identity represents (e.g., being a Romanian in the U.K.), while also holding onto a privileged identity (e.g., their whiteness and professionalism) to mitigate the effects of the stigma or even to avoid all kinds of identity work (Alvesson & Robertson, 2016; Doldor & Atewologun, 2020). These studies assume that by "dodging" the traditional tactics to segment or integrate identities, one will not need to engage as much in identity work (cf. Alvesson & Robertson, 2016).

Such ambiguous individual strategies on the part of employees suggest that a complete integration or segmentation of identities is uncommon (cf. Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). In the present study, we try to capture the different possibilities ranging from integration to segmentation. We consider that a more fitting approach to understanding how gay employees deal with their stigmatized identity in an intrapersonal network of identities is to situate the individual's responses to threats or opportunities on a continuum from integration to segmentation (cf. Charoensap-Kelly et al., 2020; Lindsey et al., 2020; Ragins, 2008). It follows that there is not only one "closet" or one cognitive appraisal but many. New daily situations may lead to minor changes in behavior, even new "coming outs" (Sedgwick, 2008), as well as new decisions on how to behave with significant identity work devoted to integrating or segmenting work and stigmatized identities. This effort includes the confusing possibility of trying to find a half-way approach.

The plurality of contexts in which employees must determine how to behave may lead to a "disclosure disconnect" (Ragins, 2008), that is, when gay employees integrate or segment their identities at different levels across contexts. Given the psychological stress that this situation engenders, integration across life domains can be seen as beneficial to stigmatized employees (Lindsey et al., 2020). Indeed, studies on stigma management suggest that integration brings some "peace of mind," greater focus on job-related tasks, and improvements in relationships with peers and superiors (Jones & King, 2014). However, there is no consensus on this conclusion (Follmer et al., 2020), especially as being gay is often considered incompatible with professionalism (Grey, 1998).

As noted earlier, heteronormativity, as a vital component of professionalism, is deeply embedded in our society (Grey, 1998; Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009). It not only establishes a hierarchy of forms of sexuality, but it also imposes a semi-paranoid vigilance such that everything that deviates from what is deemed normal can be controlled and punished, hence reinforcing the norm (Butler, 2006). For many gay individuals, heteronormativity compels them to keep their sexual orientation closely guarded through a habit of micromanaging how they present themselves to the world—in a continuous process of identity work (Butler, 2006)

Furthermore, although studies have highlighted general benefits of integrating identities (for a review, see Follmer et al., 2020), stigma is highly contextual. When heteronormativity is intermeshed in professionalism, it may have an impact on the cognitive appraisals, behaviors, and consequences of identity work, thereby encouraging segmentation processes. Studies on stigma management, like ours, must consider as many variables as possible to capture the complexities and nuances. In this sense, it is surprising that little is known about how the process is affected by the ubiquity of SNSs—despite the reasonably abundant (albeit fragmented) literature on stigma management strategies and their consequences in the workplace. As an example, Doldor and Atewologun (2020) argue that being white allows Romanians "to opt into a generic European identity that became unnoticed [...] in the 'melting pot' of 'cosmopolitan', 'international' London-based working environments" (Doldor & Atewologun 2020, p. 19). Even if this is true, a cursory look at a person's Facebook page may raise doubts about or even shatter that notion of a generic European identity, thus revealing the stigma and even bringing unwanted consequences to the employee.

Toward an Understanding of Online Identity Work

The online world has become a new domain in which we all have to perform some identity work and choose how to behave (Bareket-Bojmel et al., 2016), particularly on SNSs frequented by a variety of audiences, causing a context collapse (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Vitak, 2012; Vitak et al., 2012a). For instance, a single post on Facebook or Instagram can be seen by a growing online audience composed of friends, family, co-workers (or virtually anyone and anywhere, in the case of open profiles); this public sharing changes the pace and nature of our relationships dramatically (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013).

Scholars are still trying to grasp how the workplace and our ways of working are affected by the Internet. Many have focused their efforts on substantiating their argument that SNSs can be a distraction from work and that there should be active steps to avoid or limit their use (Stanko & Beckman, 2015). Some researchers contend that these sites can act as an emotional echo chamber that amplifies positive and negative emotions at work (Toubiana & Zietsma, 2017). Other researchers claim that SNSs can improve job performance by giving employees a better work–life balance (Moqbel, Nevo, & Kock, 2013). Finally, some studies have pointed to the positive effect of SNSs on new employees' initiation into a company by providing opportunities to socialize and bond with colleagues, both new peers and senior colleagues (Koch, Gonzalez, & Leidner, 2012).

Focusing more specifically on online identity, Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013) adopted a boundary and self-evaluating perspective to understand how employees navigate through SNSs and the many possible strategies for integrating or segmenting work and non-work identities online (e.g., controlling content and audiences). They focused on what one shares online (and not with whom), concluding that the most favorable option—one that increases the chances of being liked and respected by peers—is to adopt a hybrid approach of controlling how one behaves while at the same time interacting and posting "professional" information (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013). Albeit important, these findings fail to explain how employees with concealable stigmas behave online. Several questions emerge, especially in the context of social media studies.

First, it is not clear whether stigmatized employees adopt the same behaviors that previous research has mapped (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Vitak, 2012; Vitak, Crouse, & Larose, 2011), or what specificities exist in the overlap between SNSs and face-to-face interactions. The existing studies have considered self-verification or self-enhancement motives to predict employees' online behavior, implicitly assuming that we all carry out some sort of personal branding (cf. Vallas & Cummins, 2015). For stigmatized employees, however, there is much more at stake, as they can suffer prejudice at work (Stenger & Roulet, 2018), be perceived as less professional (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009), or use SNSs in different and yet unknown ways that somehow benefit them. In sum, gay employees may consider possible threats and opportunities in the evaluations (or cognitive appraisals) they perform when deciding whether to integrate or segment their identities (Bataille & Vough, 2020; Jones & King, 2014; Petriglieri, 2011). The confluence of these different motives might generate tensions to gay employees, especially with the growing demands from organizations for online participation. Different motivations may lead to different behaviors, especially when widely diverse audiences cohabit the online environment. In brief, there is a need for further investigation into how stigmatized employees appraise and behave in the overlapping area between their online and offline worlds.

Second, the challenges that the Internet and SNSs (Vitak, 2012) bring to the identity work of stigmatized employees are so far relatively unknown. Being a "professional" was already a difficult task for gay men in face-to-face interactions (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009). Controlling online audiences and content may be even more problematic in popular mainstream SNSs, most notably Facebook and Instagram. These SNSs are designed for the sharing of information. Their "default publicness" (Cho, 2018) makes it extremely difficult for someone to mask or totally control the content and the audiences that have access to it.[7] Therefore, it is necessary to have a fresh perspective that considers the tensions and implications of social networking interactions for identity work.

Third, because they did not account for particularities among employees, previous studies (Lee, 2020; Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Vitak, 2012) pointed out possible general advantages of finding a middle ground between integration and segmentation of work and non-work identities in SNSs, ostensibly offering the best of both worlds. However, there is little

[7] However, Tumblr and Reddit have features that make it easy for the LGBTQIA+ community to create a safe space where they can share their experiences and feelings, create bonds and a sense of community (Cho, 2018; Hanckel et al., 2019).

consensus about this possibility. Some studies on social media and sexual minorities have argued that online identity curation efforts aimed at segmenting identities may lead to positive psychological consequences for LGBTIA+ individuals, allowing them to create safe spaces (Gray, 2009; Gray, Visibility, & Scott, 2010; Hanckel et al., 2019). Yet, such efforts can also lead to a spiral of silence that is not beneficial to the broader process of destigmatization (Fox & Warber, 2015). When privacy settings are used to "silence" each other, stigmatized and stigmatizing audiences are further segregated online. To complicate this analysis even further, as we argued, stigma studies have indicated that integration of identities in face-to-face interactions is the best approach (Lindsey et al., 2020; Ragins, 2008). These different online and offline perspectives, as well as possible consequences for stigmatized employees, are irreconcilable, suggesting the need for a more nuanced perspective.

As we have shown, a considerable amount is already known about the general process of identity work. Nonetheless, the proliferation of SNSs in the workplace may change significantly how stigmatized employees behave, and so far, we know very little about these changes in their identity work. After all, SNSs are not only a new context but also a non-place that different social groups cohabit with an "invisible audience". That audience has access to at least part of us 24/7. At the same time, these sites are materially grounded and displayed on the smartphones, tablets, and notebooks that are increasingly present. Understanding the potential and importance of such topics, we explore the case of gay men at Globalcar, a highly stigmatized group of employees, to answer the following question: *How do employees with concealable stigmas perform identity work in the interplay of the online and offline worlds at work?*

6.2 Research Context

Latin America and sexual minorities

Historically, Latin America has been conflicted regarding sexual minorities. A strong link has existed between religiosity and homophobia, as the condemnation of same-sex relations has been "justified" by the idea that men and women were created by God for the purpose of procreation (Venturi & Bokany, 2011). In this context, most countries in the region are among the most dangerous ones for LGBTQIA+ individuals (OpenDemocracy, 2019). Despite this dismal scenario, some Latin American countries have seen some promising developments. The Brazilian Supreme Court, for instance, has advanced LGBTQIA+ rights considerably in recent years, with the recognition of same-gender partnerships in 2011. In June 2019, homophobia was given the same legal status as racism in the country (BBC, 2019c). Also, since May 2020, blood donations from gay donors can no longer be prohibited (D'Agostino & Rodrigues, 2020).

These advancements in LGBTQIA+ rights clash dramatically with the reactionary tendencies in Latin American society, which are now more evident than ever with the ascendancy of homophobic, conservative politicians in the region. The automotive industry adds an extra dimension of complexity to our context because of its masculine environment, in which the concept of professionalism is directly connected to heteronormativity (Styhre et al., 2005; Walker, Butland, & Connell, 2000). In this sense, any behaviors that deviate from what the society deems masculine or "normal" are viewed as reprehensible.

Globalcar

Our study's setting is the subsidiary of a multinational car manufacturer. Based in a Latin American country since the late 1960s, Globalcar is one of that country's biggest companies. As an industrial organization, it has multiple operational subunits and factories spread across different regions of the country, directly or indirectly employing more than 12,000 people.

Globalcar has just launched its diversity activities under the sustainability department. Given the complexity of dealing with diversity and its broad scope of possibilities, the company moved away from the controversial debate over LGBTQIA+ rights and decided to begin its diversity program by concentrating its efforts on elevating the status of women by increasing their number in managerial positions. Thus, the understanding of how gay employees deal with their stigma in the organization was an opportunity to incentivize the topic internally, particularly in the context of the growing inclusion of online interactions in professional activities.

The context collapse caused by SNSs has changed the expectations that organizations have of their employees. At Globalcar, workers are encouraged to participate in online discussions, as shown by the following excerpt from the ethnographer's journal notes pertaining to a meeting that he attended. These are the words of the sustainability manager who was directly asking his team to publicize in their profiles specific information about a social project that they were working on at the time:

> *I feel that we can't wait for the organization to publicize the project for us because it can take a long time. I'm already doing it on my Instagram and Facebook, and I think it would be very nice if some of you commented on my posts. You could also post on your social networks, so we spread the word faster.*

After his suggestion, he showed the team his SNSs, and the posts he had created to advertise their initiatives. Even though, in this case, he was only making a "suggestion", it was implicit that the Globalcar employees were expected to follow his lead by sharing their internal experiences with the broader public online, often using specific hashtags and slogans. On the one hand, this task might seem natural and innocuous to employees whose lifestyles "fit" the national and organizational standards of "normality." On the other hand, for stigmatized employees, blurring the line between one's workplace and private life— between the personal and the public—could be a delicate undertaking. Our observation of this tension spurred our research even further.

Given the growing acceptance of sexual minority rights in Europe, Canada and the United States, the scenario we present may seem extreme at first. However, it is important to note that LGBTQIA+ individuals are still marginalized to an alarming degree in many parts of the world (Hadler & Symons, 2018; Velasco, 2020). The situation has even been worsening in the last decade, as evidenced by increasing homophobia and anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation (HRW, 2018; Knight & Gall, 2020).[8]

6.3Methods

Access and Sample

Our data consist of 480 hours of observations and 20 interviews with 18 gay men employed at Globalcar from October 2018 to January 2019. A letter was sent to the HR vice-president in January 2018, and I was allocated to the sustainability department. As a former employee of the company, I already had fairly easy access to managers and peers even though I was there as a researcher, not as a Globalcar employee.

Daily accounts of my observations were written chronologically and organized into a 200-page Word document. During this period, different observation techniques were adopted, such as shadowing sustainability analysts and one stigmatized employee, participating in meetings, and helping with operational activities (e.g., analyses of Excel spreadsheets). Informal gatherings such as coffee breaks, birthday parties, and corridor conversations revealed

[8] For example, same-sex marriage is legal in only 28 countries (Felter & Renwick, 2020), Hungary has recently passed a law to make it impossible for transgender and intersex people to change their gender (Knight & Gall, 2020), and aggressive legislation has been the norm in Russia for years (HRW, 2018). Still, according to a recent Pew Research report, some countries in the region have a higher acceptance rate of same-sex relations by its population. Examples include Brazil (67%) and Mexico (69%), which is very close to more advanced countries, such as Japan (68%) and actually higher than the global median (52%) (Poushter & Kent, 2020).

a range of co-worker relationships and anecdotes that would have been difficult to map if the data collection had been limited to formal situations.[9] On many informal occasions, diversity was latent, and I facilitated the subsequent data analysis by writing the keyword "diversity" in the notes whenever this was the case.

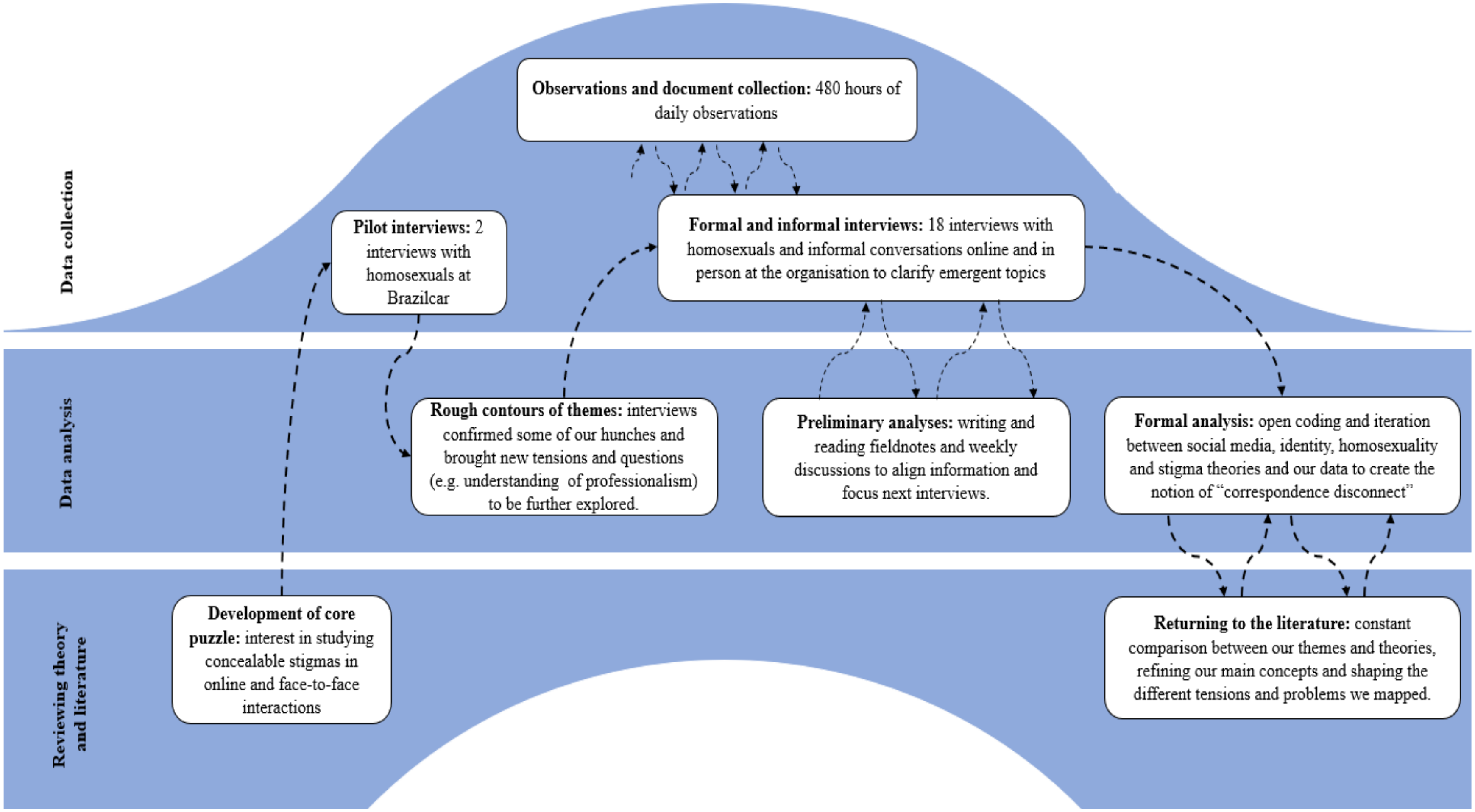
Data Analysis

Figure 6 describes our research process. We moved iteratively from theories to our data, using an abductive approach (Klag & Langley, 2013; Van Maanen, Sørensen, & Mitchell, 2007). We started with the clear conceptual idea of context collapse (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Vitak, Lampe, Gray, & Ellison, 2012b) and its impacts on employees with concealable stigmas. To organize the different steps of our analytical process, we were inspired by Harrison and Rouse (2014), who adopted a similar approach.

Development of the core questions. Given the unpleasant face-to-face environment for stigmatized employees, we were initially interested in how these employees dealt with the growing pressure to participate online. We knew from the literature that there had been very few studies of the impacts of SNSs on employees' stigma management and identity work (Follmer et al., 2020; Jones & King, 2014), so we regarded this situation as a research opportunity.

[9] When notes could not be taken immediately, my phone was used to type a few keywords, creating rough notes (Joffe et al., 1996) that were later fleshed out at my computer.

Figure 6 - Our abductive analytical approach



Pilot interviews. To delve more deeply into the main problems faced by stigmatized employees in the physical workplace and online, we formally interviewed two employees, Luciano and Gabriel[10]. Through these interviews, we explored the many possibilities that had emerged during corridor conversations. Having previously worked with me at Globalcar, both men had already developed bonds of trust with me. These interviews were instrumental in triggering snowballing sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981), as we asked Luciano and Gabriel to suggest other possible interviewees whom we later invited via e-mail to participate in the research. Our questions were open and broad: "What is the meaning of being a gay in your life?" "What do you think of diversity at Globalcar?" "Do you behave the same way online and at work?"

Rough contours of themes. The pilot interviews revealed several unexpected and contradictory topics that were developed later during interviews with other participants. These topics included the ambiguous perception of online and face-to-face professionalism. Gabriel mentioned that being gay does not affect his professionalism, while Luciano argued that being a professional involves not mentioning that he (or anyone else) is gay. "We are all human beings, we're all the same," he stated. Both men provided detailed accounts of the strategies they adopt to segment their identities both online and in face-to-face interactions, as well as unexpected consequences that have made them reappraise and change their behaviors. Both used to segment their work and stigmatized identities, but for different reasons, they soon decided to alter their behaviors toward integration. With our initial informal conversations and observations combined with our knowledge of the literature, we defined the main problems and topics we wanted to investigate further. Although we realized that these employees carry out intense identity work in integrating and segmenting identities to match their behaviors on

[10] All names are fictious.

SNSs and in face-to-face interactions, we could not understand, at this point, why the contradictions we observed were happening.

Formal and informal interviews. We prepared a semi-structured interview protocol covering aspects such as behaviors across social groups, the impact of the Internet on such interactions over time, why/how/when/where the men were integrating/segmenting their identities, and the effects of their decisions at work. In total, we conducted 20 interviews with 18 gay men at Globalcar. (We interviewed Luciano and Gabriel again at the end of the *in loco* data collection.) Each interview lasted from 60 to 120 minutes. All the interviews were in their native language we also spoke.

Given the sensitive subject of our study, we explicitly informed all the potential participants that our discussions were confidential and would be used only for research purposes. We provided this assurance when the invitations were sent and reiterated it just before starting the interviews.[11] Globalcar's coordinator of diversity initiatives was made aware of the research, but to avoid exposing our informants, we did not advertise the study's focus on gay employees widely within the organization. Consequently, our actions were partially covert, which Roulet et al., (2017) justify as a positive strategy in research focusing on non-normative behavior.[12]

Our sample size is in line with those of other stigma studies (Cho, 2018; Creed et al., 2010). Many of our formal interviews spilled over into lunchtime conversations, corridor chats and online conversations, as most interviewees added me, the lead researcher, as a contact on SNSs. Moving beyond the formal environment of the interview helped us develop a more empathic relationship with our interviewees (Roulet, 2020), which proved prolific, as we could

[11] Given the personal topics we were exploring, as well as the hostile context, interviews were often emotionally charged, with many accounts of homophobia, prejudice, and career problems.
[12] Being gay ourselves helped us gain initial trust. Also, it should be noted that nine potential interviewees refused to participate in the research. One of their main justifications was the fear of being exposed in the workplace, even after we assured them that this would not happen. Two of them even questioned us on how we "found out" about their sexual orientation, thus reaffirming the topic's sensitivity.

later double-check specific situations or new angles that we noticed in the data. Table 5 brings our interviewees' profiles.

Table 5 - Interviewees' profiles

No.	Name (fictional)	Role	Tenure (years)	Department	Interview length (minutes)
1	Calvin	Analyst	0.5	Human Resources	60
2	Keaton	Analyst	22	Quality	70
3	Mario	Analyst	8	Marketing	70
4	Ronaldo	Analyst	15	Production Line	70
5	Oscar	Analyst	0.5	Purchasing	90
6	Antonio	Analyst	0.8	Sales	100
7	Luciano	Coordinator	5	Sales	50
8	Louis	Coordinator	11	Quality	60
9	Gabriel	Coordinator	5	Sales	60
10	Robert	Coordinator	9	Engineering	60
11	Francis	Coordinator	6	Marketing	80
12	Travis	Coordinator	12	Finance	80
13	Joseph	Coordinator	0.5	Purchasing	80
14	Luciano	Coordinator	5	Sales	90
15	Arnold	Coordinator	8	Logistics	90
16	Omar	Coordinator	5	Logistics	90
17	David	Coordinator	5	Marketing	110
18	Harry	Coordinator	2	Engineering	60
19	Ethan	Executive	1	Marketing	105
20	Gabriel	Executive	6	Sales	120

Observations and document collection. Concomitant with the interviews, we discussed our emerging topics with one of the sustainability analysts who was also responsible for implementing diversity practices at Globalcar. She made suggestions, explained Globalcar's current and future diversity plans, and gave us copies of documents and presentations on relevant activities in the organization. Daily observations were revealing, as diversity was a divisive topic during the recent presidential elections in the country of our study, and employees often shared their opinions and made jokes about it during informal occasions, such as coffee breaks and lunches.

Whereas the interviews were vital to establishing a closer relationship with stigmatized employees, the observations refined our perceptions about their daily struggles. As the primary researcher, I later visited many of the informants informally in their departments. We would converse over coffee or on a stroll through the factory. Finally, I began shadowing Luciano for a while, observing how he behaved around his peers. This close observation brought even more nuances to our data. My daily interactions with Luciano and other informants extended to the online world of Facebook and Instagram even after we left the field. Indeed, most of our informants added me on SNSs. Beyond the possibility of observing their online behavior, I could also ask them about specific topics or aspects that later emerged in our analysis. Thus, our observations were also performed in an online environment.

Preliminary analyses. We continued the iterative process of observing, interviewing, analyzing, and categorizing our data in these initial stages until we reached the point of analytical depth (Braun & Clarke, 2019; O'Reilly et al., 2012) at which new examples in the interviews were reflected in our primary constructs and did not change the way we perceived our case overall. My research partner, the second author of this paper, played a crucial role, as we could discuss our findings in depth in our weekly meetings. His views counterbalanced my possible prejudgments as the lead researcher, as I was the one immersed in the field. We also used these reflective moments to refine our questions and think of explanations for the situations we were facing.

We defined a central part of our story as attempts to find connections between the behavior in face-to-face interactions and those in online interactions. We also knew that this behavior was fraught with tensions, as the identity work that these stigmatized employees were performing had unintended outcomes. Later, since employees in our case study re-evaluated their behaviors to try to find an ideal scenario, we also had to consider our observations as specific to a certain point in time. In this way, we had a good overall picture of our case, but we still needed to clarify its nuances.

Formal analysis and returning to the literature. Having collected the necessary information and developed the main ideas, we left the field and started coding using NVivo. We did a line-by-line coding of our interviews and observations, resulting in more than 200 nodes that we subdivided into: (1) reasons for integrating/segmenting; (2) possible strategies to segment and integrate identities in face-to-face and online interactions; (3) possible tensions;

and (4) consequences. We based these broad categories on our preliminary insights and analysis that indicated these different elements in our case. This process, however, occurred multiple times before we were satisfied with our final main categories. For instance, in previous rounds of coding, we had not formally considered the possible tensions as an important aspect to explain our story. We limited such instances as “possible problems”. In the second step of our analysis, we referred to the literature to make sense of our data and further categorize each of these themes.

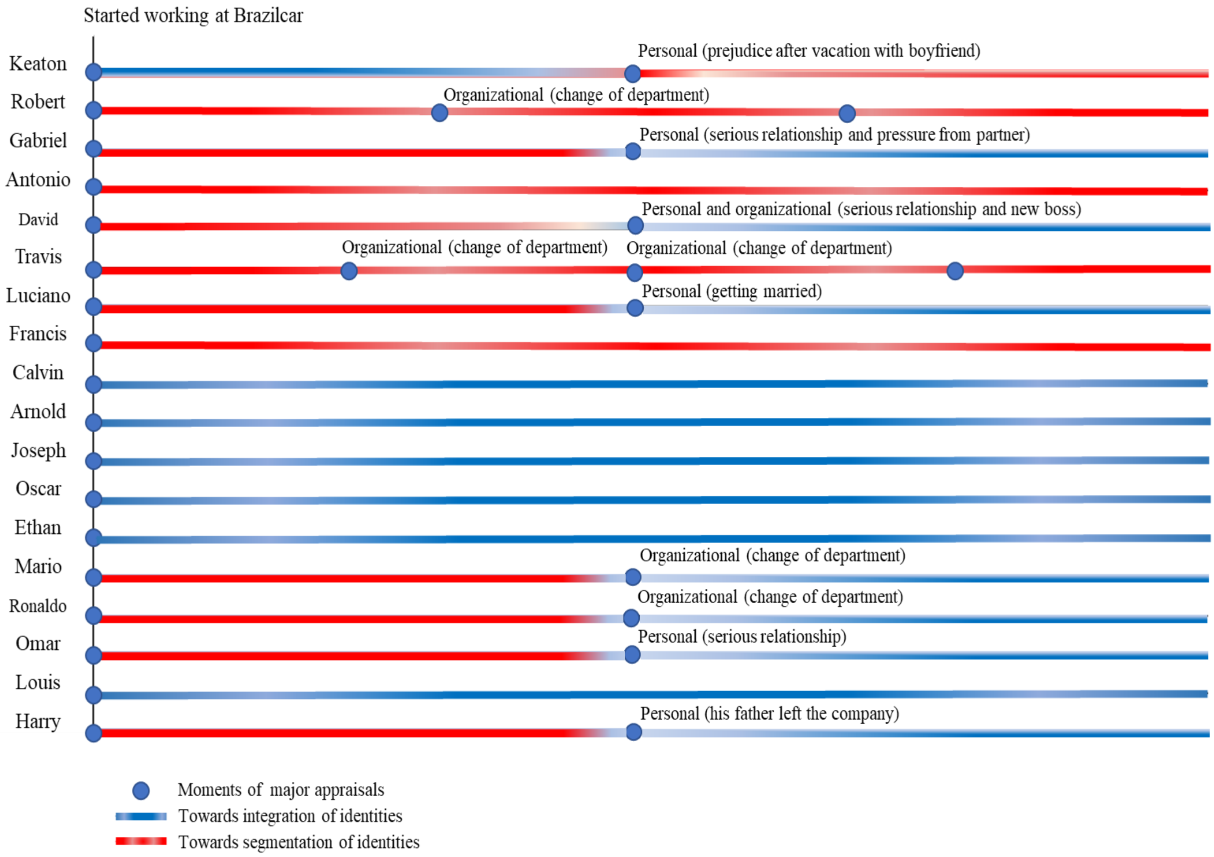
Reasons to Integrate/Segment

We knew from our data that the degree of openness or secretiveness varied, depending on how individual stigmatized employees analyzed the possible advantages and drawbacks of integrating or segmenting their identities. Some were explicit about their sexual orientation. Others were more discreet about it. Then there were those who worked assiduously at keeping it hidden. Our codes indicated that when stigmatized employees were deciding whether to show or conceal their sexual orientation, they weighed the opportunities or threats in a cost-benefit analysis, adjusting their behavior accordingly. This process is similar to what Bataille and Vough (2020) term cognitive appraisal.

To understand when this appraisal happens, we conducted an individual behavior analysis for each of our 18 informants. We revisited their stories within Globalcar and coded the specific moments when and reasons why (personal or organizational changes) employees decided to integrate or segment their identities. Figure 7 illustrates our analysis. Through it, we understood that employees carried out an initial cognitive appraisal when they started working for Globalcar and later made minor modifications (represented by the bar) or major reappraisals (represented by the circles). This pattern suggested that we were dealing with a dynamic phenomenon. It is important to note that we disregarded differences in tenure in our figure because our main objective was to understand the reasons for cognitive appraisals.

It is important to note that this analysis was possible because we asked our informants to retell their journeys at Globalcar, explaining how they dealt with their stigmas and their interactions with colleagues. Thus, although our research is not longitudinal, an over-time analysis could be done with the rich accounts from our informants.

Figure 7 - When and why cognitive appraisal happens



Strategies to Segment/Integrate Identities

We then investigated employees' behaviors after the appraisal. Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013) classify general strategies that employees can adopt online in terms of "content control" and "audience control." We used these labels to code situations in which our informants adopted content and audience control mechanisms, and we added a new category from our data: "fabrication" (when employees create information). Our data also indicate that some employees were engaging in destigmatization efforts, bringing two new strategies to our analysis: “making a political stand” and “community support building” (creating actions to signal, differentiate, or normalize their stigmas toward integration). As for face-to-face interactions, we used the same labels. We already knew from our initial analysis that employees were trying to make these interactions correspond with their online behavior at work. This effort was further confirmed in the coding process.

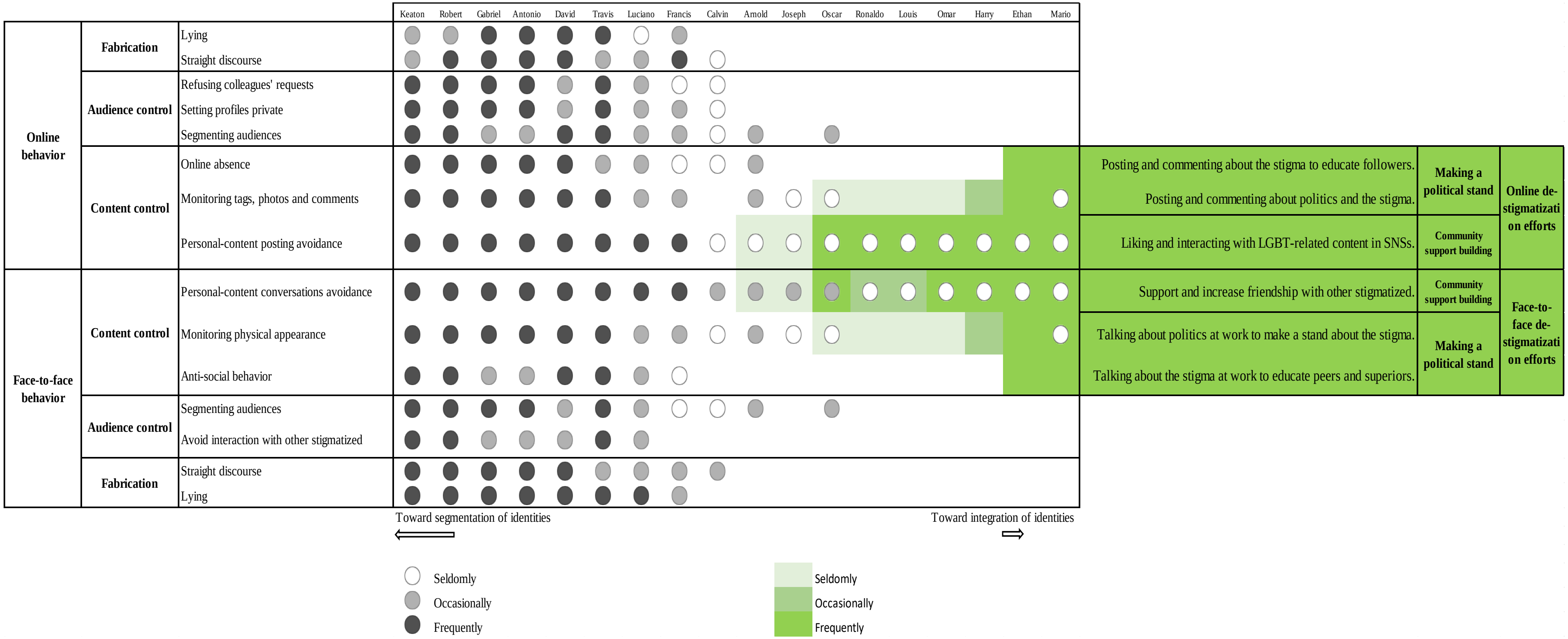
As the second step in analyzing this portion of our data, we evaluated whether and how frequently each employee adopted the strategies we had mapped. Instead of portraying different strategies as part of either concealing or hiding preference, we considered the integration and segmentation of identities as situated on a continuum (cf. Ragins, 2008). We developed a four-frequency scale to analyze their behavior: no adoption, seldom, occasionally, or frequently (e.g., Keaton occasionally lies about having a female partner but always sets his online profiles to private).

Using an Excel spreadsheet, we conducted a new individual analysis of our 18 informants and their mechanisms. For this analysis, we used the employees’ speeches (for online behavior) and observations (for online and face-to-face behaviors). In a few cases, we noticed that some of our informants did not mention a specific behavior or were ambiguous (e.g., it was not clear if and when Oscar segmented audiences, as he had argued before that he tried not to do so). In such instances, we double-checked with interviewees, as we had online access to them. Finally, whereas the frequencies of “no adoption” and “seldom” were easy to identify (they often mentioned they never or rarely adopted a behavior), occasional and frequent behaviors were harder to categorize. In some cases, employees were direct, claiming they always behaved in a certain way. In other instances, we used as a parameter to determine an “occasional behavior” when employees mentioned they were constantly monitoring their behavior, but these worries were translated into the actual behavior less often (e.g., Luciano analyzes all invitations he receives from colleagues but refuses only those he believes are threatening). If any interviewees reported that they were frequently monitoring their behaviors and also changing them, we would categorize this behavior as “frequent”. We reorganized our sample to consider the continuum of identity integration and segmentation, resulting in the configuration in Figure 8 that constitutes the core of our correspondent behavior cycle. It illustrates the attempts to apply similar face-to-face and online strategies, be it to integrate or to segment work and stigmatized identities.

Tensions

We knew from the narratives that correspondent behavior was leading to some impasses. In addition, our coding revealed (in line with prior literature) that SNSs bring irreconcilable tensions. For example, SNSs can impede attempts to hide information because of their default publicness (Cho, 2018), whereas curation of online content can arguably help gay employees create a safe space and bring positive psychological outcomes (Hanckel et al., 2019). However, this choice demands time, effort, and skills that many individuals do not possess (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013). Our informants’ narratives corroborated this contradiction. We concluded that it represents a tension between “default publicness vs. identity curation efforts”. Professionalism was also problematic. Previous literature has argued that heteronormativity is connected to face-to-face professionalism (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009; Woods & Harbeck, 1992), but the new “online professionalism” in our data required interactions that the stigmatized employees generally did not welcome. After many iterations and discussions, we embraced this contradiction as a second set of tensions: “online vs. face-to-face professionalism”.

Figure 8 -Individual adoption of mechanisms in online and face-to-face interactions



Outcomes

In our coding process, we mapped all the possible intended and unintended consequences, once again based on our informants' narratives as well as our observations. We further organized these outcomes into individual, interpersonal, and organizational. We subcategorized our codes in these different levels of analysis to understand if integrating or segmenting identities would generally lead to positive or negative results in each category. We realized that, in many cases, some correspondence was rarely ideal, as it led to many ambiguous or even adverse consequences. This explained why employees were constantly reappraising and altering their behaviors, thereby restarting the cycle we had identified.

We assembled our findings several times in different PowerPoint figures, moving arrows and including and excluding categories until we had created a cohesive explanation of our data with the core behavior, tensions, consequences, and cognitive appraisals. In writing up our account, to avoid the loss of our vivid experience of being in the organization, we crafted descriptive vignettes (cf. Reay et al., 2019) based on the most significant experiences from our informants and observations. These vignettes are introduced in the next section. They are followed by an analysis of our findings, incorporating more data from our interviews and observations.

6.4 The correspondent behavior cycle

Our results reveal that these stigmatized employees performed an initial analysis and engaged in a set of efforts to integrate or segment their stigmatized and work identities in both face-to-face and SNS interactions. We label these attempts "correspondent behavior," as the employees were attempting to match their in-person and online strategies. Yet this behavior rarely had the expected outcomes for employees, since tensions emerged from the new professional expectations. The characteristics of online platforms led to new appraisals in a continuous “correspondent behavior cycle”. In the remainder of this section, we explore this cycle in three parts: (1) the appraisal and correspondent behavior, (2) the tensions, and (3) the unintended outcomes and new appraisals.

Appraisals and Correspondent Behavior

All the employees in our case study decided to behave in a certain way when they started working at Globalcar, in both face-to-face and online interactions. Based on their initial perceptions of the context in which they were inserted, they identified potential threats and opportunities involved in integrating or segmenting their stigmatized and work identities. Mario, for example, saw a threat as early as his first interview for the job and determined at that point that he would segment identities: “It all started in the interview, right? I dressed more formally. It wasn’t for a marketing position, and then I realized the environment I was getting into.” Conversely, Joseph went in the opposite direction, seeing an opportunity to integrate his identities, as he had worked for another company in the automotive sector where he had suffered daily prejudice. He did not want to go through the same experience at Globalcar.

These specific examples suggest that appraisals are highly subjective, as they depend on employees’ past and current experiences inside and outside the organization. The Latin American industrial context influenced these employees’ analyses significantly, not only in this first evaluation but also over time. Besides the initial appraisals, they were continually calibrating the way they behaved in face-to-face and online interactions, performing daily adjustments to increase or decrease the salience of the stigmatized identity.

Employees who are more inclined to segment their identities may adopt several strategies to control how they come across at work, whereas those who lean towards the integration of identities adopt fewer mechanisms and use them less frequently, perhaps engaging in destigmatization efforts in all their interactions. Matching their behaviors across domains, they adopted the same overall strategies, even though the specific mechanisms used in online and offline communication might vary. Some engaged in content control in face-to-face interactions, monitoring their haircuts or clothes to "fit" the corporate environment. In online interactions, they also controlled content by monitoring tags, photos, or friends' comments. To illustrate the nuances involved in correspondent behavior, let us consider two extremes: when employees want to segment (Vignette 1) or integrate (Vignette 2) as much as possible their work and stigmatized identities.

Vignette 1 – Vanessa is actually Vanderson. Gabriel is always bragging about Vanessa, his girlfriend. His Facebook and Instagram pages regularly feature pictures of the two of them together. Even so, no one at Globalcar has actually seen Vanessa in person. Although she does exist, she is only a good platonic friend who attends many social events with Gabriel, while his real partner is a man named Vanderson who also works in the automotive industry. As Gabriel admitted later, "I never lied, I just omitted information. Everything that I said really happened, I just changed the sex and the name of my partner."

Curiously, David—who does not know Gabriel—also has a "fake girlfriend" whose name is also Vanessa. Both Gabriel and David decided to restrict the access that their peers have to information online by setting their profiles as private or ignoring friendship requests. Through these tactics, they could maintain their version of the story as the only one available, thereby avoiding questions from their peers. Whenever Gabriel talks about Vanessa, he shows pictures of her on his cell phone. If colleagues want to add him as a friend on Facebook or Instagram, he limits the information that they can access or simply ignores the request. By contrast, David does not want to deal with the stress of worrying about the number of possible inconsistencies when crafting narratives concerning his personal life. Although he does not want to appear rude, he is tired of colleagues' questions about his vacation or social events with Vanessa—tired of having to create details about his fake relationship. As David put it, *People were always asking me: "Did you travel with Vanessa?", "Why didn't I see her in your pictures from this weekend on Facebook?", and sometimes I replied: "What difference does it make in your life? Why do you care?" I was really upset by those questions! (...) If the person is just a colleague, and not a friend, there is no point in talking about these [matters] with them.*

To avoid having their sexual orientation questioned, both Gabriel and David also attempt to behave as "masculine" as possible at work, modulating their voices, the expressions they use, and the clothes they wear. However, David argued that he is not changing the way he is too much, saying that he was always more "reserved"—even though this reserve might be a result of years of repressing his gay identity.

In this example, Gabriel and David have adopted correspondent behavior in face-to-face and online interactions in three dimensions: (1) content control when they monitor tags, comments, and photos, avoid posting and talking about their real partners, and adopt more stereotypically masculine traits at work in terms of voice and clothing; (2) audience control when they do not accept their peers' online friendship requests and avoid conversation with specific "nosy" colleagues, and (3) fabrication when they deliberately construct stories and relationships, using online photos and spoken anecdotes at work to develop credible accounts of something that never happened. Now, let us consider the opposite situation: employees deciding to integrate their identities as much as possible.

Vignette 2 – Testing boundaries. Mario, a communications analyst, is the gay man at Globalcar who comes to mind first when other employees think of a gay colleague. He was mentioned by many of our interviewees when we asked them about peers who might also participate in the research. In one of our conversations, he was wearing a floral shirt with stylish pants and shoes and had a fashionable haircut. Despite his apparent freedom to express himself within the organization, he confessed that it had taken him three years to accept online friendship requests from workplace peers: “It was always a question of testing boundaries; sometimes I was ‘too gay’ and had to hold back, but little by little, I tried to push the frontiers so that I could be myself.” Currently, Mario not only attempts to express himself as much as possible but also uses his SNSs to advocate against his stigmatization, creating explanatory posts on Facebook and even a series of stories on Instagram on diverse topics related to sexual minorities and other stigmas (e.g., obesity or race).

Over time, Mario has modified certain aspects of his behavior, tending to adopt fewer mechanisms to segment his identities in both online and face-to-face interactions. One of the main reasons for his changes was the nation’s election of a blatantly homophobic president: “I need to use my privilege to make a stand, even though I know that some colleagues get upset with my political views,” he finishes.

Ethan, from the marketing department, is another example of an employee who is moving beyond the normalization of stigma. In the course of our conversation, he commented:

> *Every time I receive some good news at work, I play Pabllo Vittar [a drag-queen superstar] out loud and clap my hands….People stare at me and I don’t care, I need to feel well in my own office! Then they say I’m “exotic.” It’s not exotic, it’s gay, GAY!*

In Ethan’s case, he attempts to *be* gay at work, even differentiating his sexual orientation from possible other features that could somehow mask or obscure it, such as being “exotic”. He continued:

> *Now I’m adopting a more activist posture, not caring so much about what others will say. For example, one of my latest pictures on Instagram is a beautiful photo of my partner and me on the beach, very girly. It’s a love letter, and it is there [online]. But it sends chills down my spine when I do this.*

Even in these cases, the men adopt some mechanisms to control their behavior. Ethan admitted that he still cannot wear the clothes he wants, and Mario observed that his friends are always telling him that he controls the way he speaks and acts at work considerably. Such efforts to destigmatize gay employees at Globalcar are exceptions, but it is interesting how SNSs can become a platform for activism that influences peers' perceptions. The more that employees want to integrate identities, the more they use SNSs and discussions at work to normalize, or even differentiate, their stigmatized identities. Employees who have a tendency towards the integration of identities adopt fewer mechanisms to control content, audience, and fabrication. At the same time, however, they may engage in ongoing destigmatization efforts, in attempts to increase even more the opportunities they initially saw in their cognitive appraisals. Ethan posts pictures of himself with his partner, for instance, clearly asserting his sexual orientation. Mario uses SNSs to educate an invisible audience that includes peers. Both men attempt to make a political stand online that corresponds to their face-to-face interactions. At work, they are "exotic" or extravagant, pushing the boundaries of what the society considers normal. These initiatives are not a sign of less identity work, but of identity work to integrate their identities.

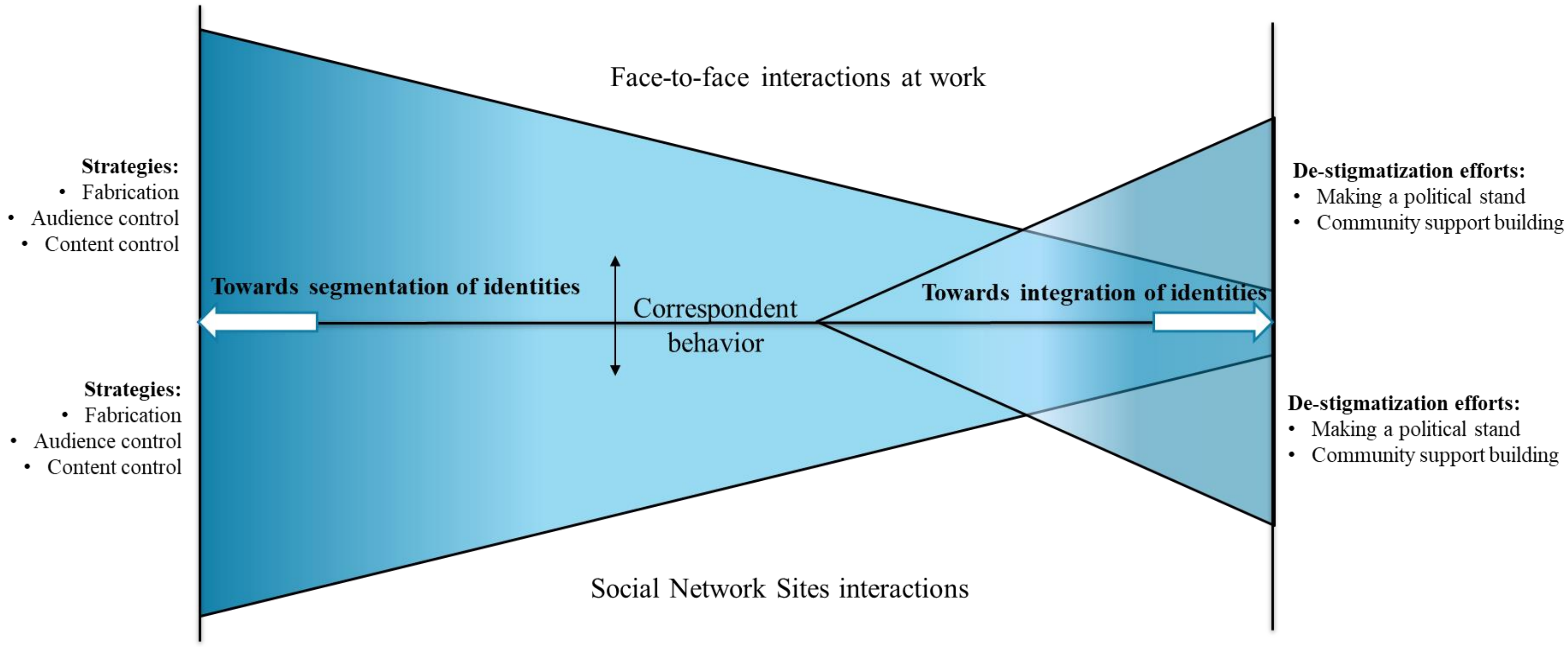
More than focusing on being in or out of the closet, our analysis centers on how employees present themselves at work and online, the way they speak and/or post, the information they choose to disclose, and the interactions, clothes, hairstyles, and pictures they post online, in a constant process of micro-management. Given the often "activist" tone of such postures, not all employees who want to integrate their identities will use destigmatization mechanisms or adopt them with the same intensity. Many individual and contextual factors may motivate employees to be more hesitant in their efforts, keeping most of their identity work to a level at which they fit in without being conspicuously different from other employees. In our case study, it was clear that the political stands that some employees were making were stronger because the country was in the midst of an extremely polarizing national election. Also, some employees were closer to engineering or production departments that were even more heteronormative than other parts of the organization.

Despite being in the same company and country, the gay employees varied markedly in their cognitive appraisals and behavior. They integrated and segmented their identities in various ways along the continuum of possibilities in correspondent behavior. Table 6 provides further examples of mechanisms that the employees adopted in each dimension, and Figure 9 summarizes the correspondent behavior and its dimensions.

Table 6 - Examples of strategies and destigmatization efforts in face-to-face and online interactions

Possible strategies and destigmatization efforts	**Examples of behaviors**
Fabrication	Using stories from past straight relationships (Travis)
	Showing/posting pictures of friends as partners (Gabriel/David)
	Lying about romantic relationships on SNSs and at work (Omar)
Audience control	Not accepting peers online (Mario/Robert/Antonio/Keaton)
	Creating lists to segment groups (Louis)
	Avoiding talking to specific peers, including other stigmatized employees, and blocking them on SNSs (Antonio/Travis)
Content control	Changing physical appearance and online names, pictures, and posts (Mario/Travis/Robert/Luciano)
	Avoiding posting or talking in general not to raise questions (Arnold/Travis)
	Avoiding talking about specific topics that may reveal the stigma (Robert/Gabriel)
Community support building	Participating in online discussions or confirming attendance in discussions/events related to the stigma (Oscar)
	Stimulating other peers to come out at work (Oscar/Ethan)
	Creating stronger bonds and a support community with others who are stigmatized (Joseph/Oscar)
Making a political stand	Creating content to explain stigma (e.g., Instagram stories) (Mario/Ethan)
	Changing profile pictures and posting content to show support for the LGBTQIA+ community (Harry/Louis)
	Changing profile pictures and posting content to show frustration with politicians or political causes that may harm LGBTQIA+ (Louis/Ronaldo)

Figure 9 - Attempts at correspondent behavior



Tensions in Attempts to Match Face-to-Face and Online Behaviors

Problems with correspondent behavior emerged when stigmatized employees attempted to apply the same rationale of face-to-face interactions in a highly different domain but were not able to fully realize and control the new aspects that are intrinsic to socializing on the Internet. SNSs reach an amplified audience at once and give immediate and lasting access to information about people's lives. Moreover, the understanding of professional online behavior is still under construction, creating ambiguity around what being "professional" really means, both online and in face-to-face interactions. These two situations presented by SNSs obscured the employees' appraisals and correspondent behavior, highlighting tensions: default publicness vs. curation efforts—and online professionalism vs. face-to-face professionalism. To illustrate how these confusing tensions unfold, we offer the case of Francis in Vignette 3.

Vignette 3 – Before being gay, I'm a professional. Francis, a coordinator in the marketing department, loves the automotive sector and sports. He is white and does not present many "gay" mannerisms, meaning that he easily passes as straight. According to Francis, it is not important or even necessary to disclose his sexual orientation at work or in non-work social settings. Even though he considers himself to be very open about being gay, he still hesitates to talk about his sexuality—even with someone he considers a close friend. As he explained:

> *I was visiting one of my best friends in London and one day I sneaked out to meet a crush. He's a photographer, so we took some semi-nude pictures, which I posted on Facebook. The other day, in the morning, I thought, "I'm going to tell her today, over breakfast, that I'm gay, I even met a guy yesterday, and she doesn't know." But I don't know why I couldn't, so I came back without telling her.*

Francis thinks he is dealing well with his sexuality. After all, people must know, so he posts semi-nude pictures on Facebook, yet actually talking about it is taboo. His positioning is even more puzzling when he shares his thoughts on professionalism:

> *I try to show that you can be a professional, polite, and not engage in any sort of seduction, or wear sexy clothes, sensual dances, or send messages to colleagues via Skype, which has happened to me, by the way. Both male and female peers, sending me messages, hitting on me. Once, it was a Friday night, and a colleague sent me a message on Facebook asking what I was doing, saying she was bored. I just replied to her vaguely, "I really don't mix my personal and professional lives."*

Interestingly, Francis does not want to be seen as a sexual being at any point, even in possible *straight* flirting, which appears to be condoned in the overall environment at Globalcar. Many couples have met each other while working at the company, and this does not make them less professional. However, Francis argues that he is not there to "get a fiancé, but to work." Meanwhile, his online behavior suggests otherwise, as he continually chats with co-workers on Facebook, the same SNS on which he posts highly personal information, such as his semi-nude pictures.

Default publicness vs. curation efforts to create online safe spaces. This example illustrates the tension between the default publicness of mainstream SNSs, such as Facebook and Instagram, and the identity curation efforts of the stigmatized employees. While he does not engage in many strategies to segment his identities (at work, he already passes as straight, and online he posts whatever he wants), Francis attempts to match his online and face-to-face behavior. Even so, the design of such SNSs exposes information to an invisible audience that includes co-workers, meaning that his personal life is much more exposed than he currently acknowledges in his appraisals or wishes to disclose with his correspondent behavior. This feature of SNSs dissolves possible online safe spaces in which he could express himself freely. For this to happen, Francis would need to undertake ongoing curation efforts that he is not willing to make or is even capable of making. Since SNSs are designed to expose information, it is difficult for stigmatized employees to evaluate whether their discourses and actions are coherent. Note that this tension does not entail a direct contradiction, but it is a dilemma that Francis and other stigmatized employees confront constantly. Furthermore, it contributes to unintended consequences in their correspondent behavior.

Other employees in our sample also face this dilemma. Gabriel, for example, regrets that he cannot develop the same level of online relationships as his straight peers enjoy, and the overexposure of mainstream SNSs casts a shadow on the possible positive effects of online curation and the creation of safe spaces. Eventually, he decided not to reduce his online interaction because of the default publicness of SNSs, and difficulties in predicting who sees what. Likewise, Antonio used his SNSs as a safe space to express himself, but after he joined Globalcar, he decided not to post on Facebook and Instagram as frequently as before. As he states, "I'm still new here, and the environment does not really create incentives for me to express myself, so I just stopped posting anything that may expose my sexuality." Francis, on the other hand, found Instagram a comfort, a vehicle through which he could express his beliefs and sexuality. He initially ignored the default publicness of SNSs until his father alerted him to its dangers. Referring to his father, Francis comments, "He came to me and said, 'anybody could see that, and you don't know how managers will interpret what you post. This may harm your career significantly." Therefore, the possible safe spaces that online curation creates are difficult to achieve on most SNSs. These sites exist to expose personal content, representing a growing tension for stigmatized employees.

Online versus offline professionalism. The difficulty in defining what online professionalism means also generates tensions in this example. The heteronormative norms embedded in professionalism prompt Francis to segment his identities. At the same time, Globalcar encourages online interactions and the creation of posts about the company and its activities that add a new layer of what is understood as professionalism. Francis's semi-nude pictures would hardly be regarded as professional by his co-workers. Nevertheless, limiting interaction with peers would not be considered professional either, especially as he works in the marketing department and is always talking with peers and advertising agencies via Skype and Facebook.

Francis attempts to attach himself to a superior identity (professionalism), but SNSs rapidly bring to the surface inconsistencies that he does not know how to handle. His solution is to just ignore them, in the hope that other people will do the same. Francis is far from being the only one who has difficulties dealing with these tensions. Those colleagues who have already put effort into controlling their online interactions (such as Robert and Travis) may become even more neurotic about their appraisals and interactions, while those who do not care at all (such as Omar, Mario, and Ethan) may face unexpected situations in which specific information about their lives is exposed against their will. Mario summed up the constant worry triggered by these tensions: “It’s a daily hangover.” The new and unknown online environment is harmful for the supposedly ideal correspondent behavior, generating unintended consequences for employees.

(Un)intended Outcomes and Reappraisals

Thus far, we have determined that the stigmatized employees evaluate and attempt to match their face-to-face and online behaviors, which generates a great deal of confusion and tension. Now, let us reflect on the unintended consequences of such a truncated approach. Our data reveal individual, interpersonal, and organizational outcomes that indicate that correspondent behavior is rarely the ideal response. To illustrate the implications of this finding, we offer the case of Gabriel in Vignette 4, complemented later with quotes from our data.

Vignette 4 – Becoming a joke. After years of suspecting that Vanessa was a man, colleagues found Vanderson’s SNS profile and saw some pictures of him and Gabriel together, with comments such as “I love this couple.” Since then, Gabriel’s bogus relationship has been a running joke behind his back during coffee breaks. One day, the manager of the department arrived in the kitchen and mentioned that Gabriel was in her office showing pictures from his last trip with Vanessa. When she left, the colleagues were looking at each other, suppressing smiles, until one of them broke the silence: “I told her already, you know, that he is actually faking it. I’m not sure she believed it, though.”

Later, Gabriel decided to be open with the organization about his sexual orientation. He even used his SNSs as a means of coming out. He explains:

> *I posted a picture with my boyfriend and me together, and I guess she [Gabriel’s boss] saw it. The next time we met each other, she asked: “Are you happy with him?” So, it is convenient to post and let people know about it. I don’t really need to say anything anymore. It’s there.*

Gabriel transformed what had been a source of preoccupation into an auxiliary tool in the ongoing process of coming out. In a later open conversation, he reflected on his previous behavior:

> *When I look back, the only thing I regret is the time I missed with everybody, you know, because I couldn’t let peers be part of my life, always afraid, always worried about people finding out. I couldn’t post a picture online, comment using gay slang, or anything. I even missed Xavier’s [another peer] wedding because I would have to take my boyfriend.*

Xavier not only knew that Gabriel was gay but also realizes that he did not attend his wedding for this reason, as he complained:

> *I still can’t believe he did that. I even mentioned casually in a conversation that another colleague of ours was attending the wedding with his boyfriend, to see his reaction. He just ignored what I said and talked about some work-related tasks.*

For Gabriel, hiding his sexual orientation even caused problems with the manager of the department, who said: “I don’t have any problem with homosexuals, but why was he hiding it from me? How can I trust a person who is not honest with me?”

Employees, such as Gabriel, who are in the habit of segmenting their identities, may suffer less direct discrimination, but the identity work to segment their identities requires painstaking effort, especially with the default public nature of Facebook and Instagram. Colleagues often suspect that there is something disingenuous going on. They quickly investigate and find conflicting information online, which harms interpersonal relationships. At the organizational level, these individuals who segment their identities promote an online spiral of silence that is also present at work. Ultimately, this spiral is detrimental to diversity practices, as the stigma becomes a topic that is not to be discussed. Gabriel’s behavior normalized a silence about his stigma, as though being gay was external to the organizational environment.

This situation is also exemplified in Francis’s behavior in Vignette 3. Francis went a step further in the silencing at Globalcar. Once, the advertising agency that worked for the company created an online and offline media campaign that depicted a gay couple. Francis was against it, and the campaign did not air. As a result, he had a direct impact on the organization’s non-engagement with the issue. His constant efforts to segment and erase traces of his gay identity—in order not to erode his “professionalism”—had an impact on him that went beyond his direct relationships.

Employees who are more likely to integrate their identities may suffer more direct prejudice, especially with the exposure of the stigma online. Some employees (Keaton, Mario, Joseph, Omar, and Harry) reported not being considered for promotion, or even (Arnold, Travis, and Louis) being seen as less professional for not conforming to heteronormativity. Nonetheless, by integrating their identities, they reduce the identity work necessary to hide their stigma. At the organizational level, they serve as examples to other stigmatized employees, promoting normalization and destigmatization, and using SNSs as a platform to talk about partners, LGBTQIA+ causes or to create educational content (such as Ethan and Mario did in Vignette 2).

In view of the potentially harmful consequences, it is hard to affirm that integration of identities is the optimal choice. Segmenting identities in online and face-to-face interactions is also far from perfect, given the problematic interpersonal and organizational consequences. Adopting a half-measure, as Francis does, seems to be the worst of both worlds, as it damages professionalism, makes relationships with peers difficult, and promotes a spiral of silence. Hence, correspondent behavior is problematic because of the tensions that the online world brings to stigmatized employees, leading to a situation that is far from ideal.

As the cycle continues and tensions emerge, the unintended consequences hit hard, and employees may reappraise their behaviors, either increasing/decreasing the salience of their stigmatized identities or moving completely from integration to segmentation of identities (or vice-versa). Cognitive appraisals can generate minor and major changes in correspondent behavior. Ethan, in Vignette 2, explained that he felt he was "coming back to the closet" in daily situations that made him segment his identities in both online and face-to-face interactions. Mario was trying to push back the frontiers one day at a time, expressing himself more, signaling his sexuality online and, in time, accepting peers as online friends. Whereas Ethan was reducing the salience of his stigmatized identity, Mario was increasing his after performing minor daily evaluations. Nevertheless, there were also moments of major reappraisal when employees reconsidered fundamentally how to behave in face-to-face and online interactions. Vignette 5 reveals Keaton's moment of reappraisal.

Vignette 5 – The woman at the hairdresser. Keaton has been working in the same subunit at Globalcar for 22 years and has suffered several episodes of homophobic treatment during his tenure. The most dramatic situation took place when he had been traveling on leave some years ago. His partner took pictures of them together and posted and tagged him on Facebook. A few days before returning to work, he went to a local hair salon and was approached by a woman, who held out her phone to him and asked: “Is that you in this picture?” To his surprise, this woman he had never seen before was displaying a picture of him and his boyfriend hugging each other during their trip. She explained that her husband also worked at Globalcar and that this photo had been printed from Facebook and circulated on the production line, exposing his same-sex relationship. Upon Keaton’s return to work, colleagues stared at him wherever he went in the factory. He soon discovered that the colleague who sat next to him—a conservative Christian—was the person responsible for printing and circulating the image. After all the turmoil resulting from this incident, Keaton decided to be more reserved, adopting several mechanisms to mask his sexual orientation as much as he could, both online and in face-to-face interactions. Commenting on these changes, he said,

> *When I started [working here], my hair was longer. My clothes were tight, so people recognized me as gay very easily [...] Over time, I changed my hairstyle and clothing to avoid comments and even let my beard grow a lot to be more masculine.*

On SNSs, Keaton blocks several colleagues, does not accept friendship invitations from others and is engaged in full content control to avoid posting anything that might mark him as gay. Nonetheless, he does not seem to “fool” his peers with his efforts. Louis and Travis, two of his friends, commented that they feel sorry for him because his workplace peers are aware of his sexual orientation despite all his efforts to conceal it. Even Keaton acknowledged that although his co-workers might know he is gay, he “does not care” because his main concern had been the daily harassment. At least, the overt homophobia he had experienced at work diminished significantly after he modified his appearance and behavior.

When Keaton joined the company, SNSs did not exist in their now familiar form. At that time, he decided to embrace some, but not many, mechanisms to segment his identities.

The segmentation was easier to manage when encounters were individualized. With the emergence of Facebook and Instagram, he continued to use the same overall strategies. However, as we observed, there were unintended consequences, culminating in a strong personal motivation for a major reappraisal. As a result, he moved toward the segmentation of his work and stigmatized identities in both online and face-to-face interactions.

When significant personal changes (e.g., serious relationships or direct prejudice) or organizational changes (e.g., new department, teams, or superiors) occur, employees may use the occasion to conduct a major reappraisal. For example, Keaton did so when his photograph was circulated at work. In contrast, Mario, decided to move toward integration of identities when he joined a new department at Globalcar. He began using his SNSs as a platform for activism and for creating posts that deconstruct prejudices. Gabriel, too, reappraised his behavior, arguing that Facebook had helped him to come out to many social groups at once. In fact, he posted a picture of himself with his partner, and even those who had not known about his sexual orientation before would now be aware of it. Thus, even though the emergence of SNSs can present a genuine threat, as in Keaton’s case, some of the gay employees saw opportunities in it. Still, finding an optimal balance between integration or segmentation of stigmatized and work identities remains a complicated endeavor. The gay employees in our case study are caught in a correspondent behavior cycle, constantly attempting to match their behaviors, facing tensions that lead to unwanted consequences and performing minor calibrations or fundamental changes in the way they behave in their physical workplaces and virtual spheres.

6.5 Discussion

Our objective in this study was to understand how employees with concealable stigmas perform identity work in the interplay of their online and offline worlds at work. Scholars have focused on how employees with concealable stigmas perform identity work in face-to-face interactions (Follmer et al., 2020; Jones & King, 2014), often minimizing the pervasiveness of the Internet. We explored this relationship and articulated a dominant identity response we labelled "correspondent behavior", that occurs in a cycle, altering how we understand identity work in a growing online world.

The Internet and social media have dramatically affected our relationships and modes of interaction. This change has been particularly problematic for marginalized individuals in the workplace. The correspondent behavior cycle that we explored illustrates how difficult it is for stigmatized employees to realize fully how to perform identity work in this new and still obscure domain. We have shown that employees performed cognitive appraisals and engaged in strategies to control content and audience, or even fabricated information, in online and face-to-face interactions, while those who were more inclined to the integration of identities also attempted some destigmatization.

We learned that these attempts to match behavior are situated on a continuum between integration and segmentation across domains, and that they generate tensions that are, in most cases, irreconcilable. Facebook and Instagram are designed to publicize information, but this objective conflicts with the benefits of identity curation and the creation of safe spaces. Furthermore, the growing expectation of online participation inherent in the notion of professionalism compounds the already established notion of heteronormativity. This expectation creates an obstacle for gay employees who may be perceived as "unprofessional" regardless of whether they integrate or segment their identities.

Given these tensions, correspondent behavior often leads to unintended individual, interpersonal, and organizational outcomes. Taken together, these outcomes indicate that neither integration nor segmentation of identities is the ideal approach. The individuals in our study were constantly calibrating, or even reappraising completely how they behave online and at work. By doing so, they perpetuate the cycle. Correspondent behavior is thus a tricky response that is marked by tensions, unintended outcomes, and frequent reappraisals. Figure

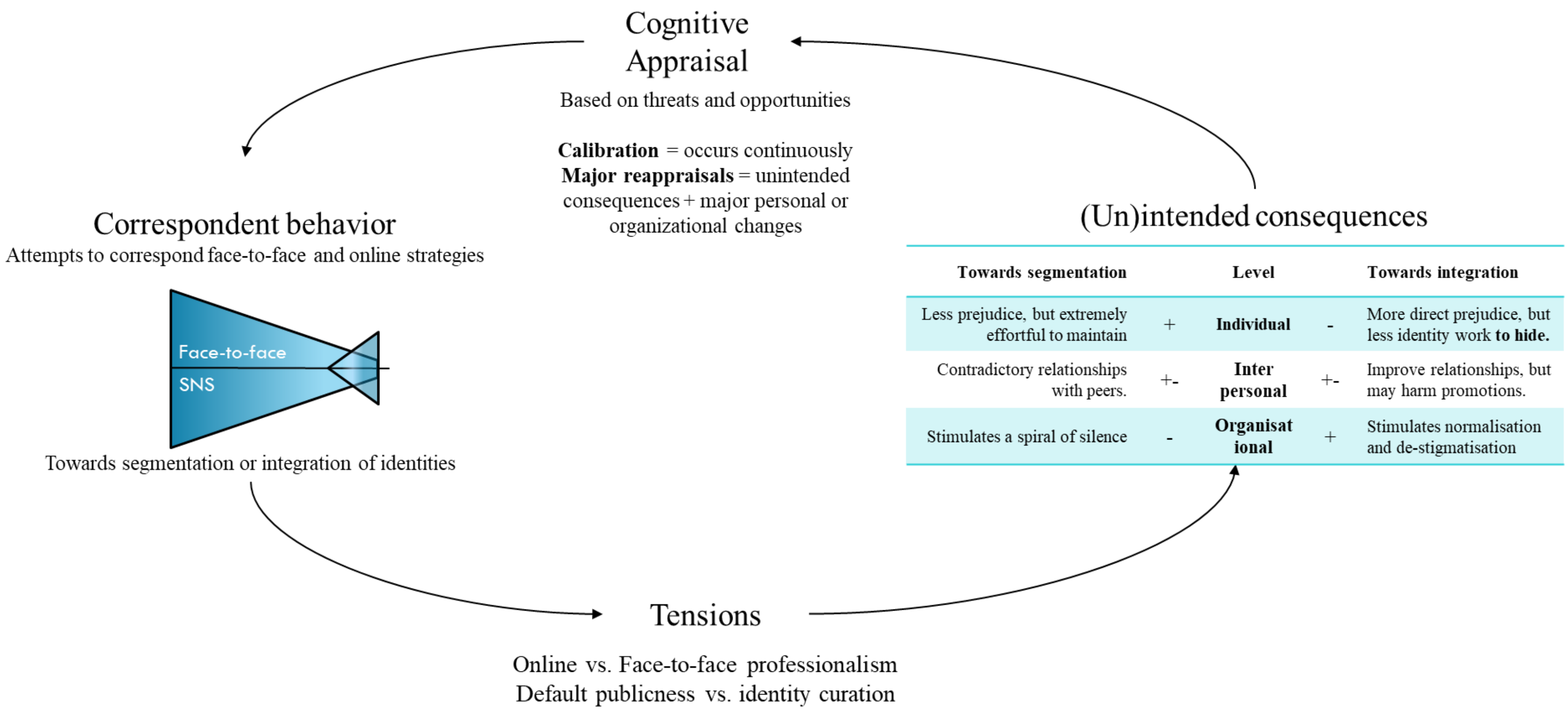
10 sets out this cycle, which substantially evolves our understanding of stigma management and identity work in face-to-face and online interactions and provides a framework to explain a large set of seemingly different behaviors of stigmatized employees even within the same organization. These findings form the basis for a contribution to scholarship on stigma management and identity work. They also have practical implications.

A Dominant Identity Response: Correspondent Behavior

To date, studies of identity work and stigma management have assumed that the Internet does not impact how employees perform identity work in their daily interactions with peers. (cf. Brown & Lewis, 2011; Follmer et al., 2020; Jones & King, 2014; Ybema et al., 2009). We knew from social media studies that SNSs bring specific aspects that could impact how gay men deal with their stigmas at work (cf. Cho, 2018; Duguay, 2016; Hanckel et al., 2019). Thus, our research showed that, contrary to what is portrayed by the stigma and identity management literature, SNSs considerably impact how gay employees behave.

Our findings change the way we understand SNSs in the workplace by demonstrating how connected and co-constructed both domains are in the identity work that stigmatized employees perform. SNSs, most notably Facebook and Instagram, have an impact on employees' stigma management and interactions at work, and these interactions also influence how stigmatized employees behave online. By analyzing face-to-face and online interactions together, we have uncovered a dominant identity response that employees with concealable stigmas perform in a growing online world, i.e., correspondent behavior.

Figure 10 - The correspondent behavior cycle



Towards segmentation		Level		Towards integration
Less prejudice, but extremely effortful to maintain	+	**Individual**	-	More direct prejudice, but less identity work **to hide.**
Contradictory relationships with peers.	+-	**Inter personal**	+-	Improve relationships, but may harm promotions.
Stimulates a spiral of silence	-	**Organisat ional**	+	Stimulates normalisation and de-stigmatisation

Because of this new, continuous and ever-growing number of online interactions, employees with concealable stigmas are tend to reappraise their behaviors daily. The result is constant flux in their identity networks with minor adjustments of identity salience. We have shown that appraisals can be understood as a continuous process of calibration that may lead to major reappraisals in which significant contextual changes are coupled with perceived identity opportunities or threats. In this sense, the quest to be authentic or to show your best self is an important motivator of employees' online behavior (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013). However, employees with concealable stigmas also take into consideration possible constant threats (and sometimes opportunities). Cases of prejudice and worries about being perceived as a professional by peers are commonplace, and SNSs reinforce such concerns. Therefore, our data suggested that stigmatized employees attempt to be as coherent as possible in both domains. Hence, we have moved beyond the branding or authenticity concerns that the few previous studies on employees' online identity management have regarded as the main motivations for online identity work (cf. Bareket-Bojmel et al., 2016; Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013).

Our study also adds in terms of the mechanisms that these employees adopt in the correspondent behavior cycle. We observed instances of content and audience control, in line with previous studies (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Rothbard, Ramarajan, Ollier-Malaterre, & Lee, 2020). Still, employees with concealable stigma also use SNSs in the fabrication of information or in destigmatization efforts. These different strategies that we mapped in our study substantiate the notion that in correspondent behavior, employees expand strategies that were once confined to face-to-face interactions, for better or for worse. The "fake relationships" can now be constructed in greater detail with online photos, check-ins, and posts, whereas the sense of community and activism are much stronger with SNSs that enable stigmatized employees to communicate with a vast audience at once. We thus formulate a dominant identity response that captures broad patterns of behaviors across stigmatized employees' online and in face-to-face interactions.

New Tensions in Identity Work and Stigma Management

A growing trend in organization studies, especially those adopting an interpretative approach, is to explore tensions and how different actors navigate them (Doldor & Atewologun, 2020; Kreiner et al., 2006; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Contradictions and tensions have always been part of stigma and identity work management, and one of the core ideas in the related scholarship is that individuals confront struggles that trigger actions to repair or defend identities (Bataille & Vough, 2020; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Toyoki & Brown, 2014). Our study advances the understanding of tensions in identity work and how stigmatized employees deal with them in an online world, first by struggling to be considered a "good professional", and second by bringing dilemmas from SNSs to the organizational context.

While the desire to be a good professional has been emphasized in several studies (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009; Woods & Lucas, 1994; Woods & Harbeck, 1992), our research makes explicit that this is often a question of being a good professional *above* anything else, and to accomplish that objective, online participation is increasingly necessary.[13] Zooming out from our informants to understand these tensions in a wider context, our findings resonate with recent scholarship on neoliberalism in which neoliberal rationality erodes all spheres of our lives and establishes market values as guiding principles (Brown, 2015; Gershon, 2016; Türken et al., 2016). Work comes first. Employees decide how to behave online based on how they

[13] Perhaps that is why most of the employees in our study used the argument about being a good professional in their narratives. Those who are more inclined to integrate their identities claimed that there is no conflict between their sexual orientation and professionalism, while those who tend to segment identities cited professionalism as one of their reasons for doing so. Both groups perform identity work to increase the hierarchy and salience of professionalism in their identity network.

behave at work, even though other important aspects of their lives (e.g., friends and family) are in the same SNSs, subject to different levels of disclosure.[14]

Consequently, our study changes the way we understand the "disclosure disconnect" identified by previous studies (Lindsey et al., 2020; Ragins, 2008). Despite varying levels of disclosure across a variety of contexts, how employees decide to deal with work determines how they behave when various groups cohabit the same SNSs. We have shown that this is not only a question of integrating identities at different levels in SNSs but also of integrating identities according to what is revealed at work. Furthermore, we have drawn on social media studies to help clarify how the "default publicness" aspect of SNSs makes it difficult for employees to perform identity curation. For example, previous research has explained that LGBTQIA+ individuals create online safe spaces by avoiding posting on mainstream SNSs, instead limiting their interactions to niche networks such as Tumblr (Fox & Warber, 2015; Hanckel et al., 2019). Our study builds on this finding by exploring a situation in which interaction on mainstream SNSs is demanded, revealing the challenge of creating safe spaces when the workplace invades the online world. Employees have access to SNSs at work, and there is always the risk of peers seeing one's SNSs on a smartphone screen, for example.

Given the ubiquity and strong default publicness of Facebook and Instagram, avoiding these SNSs is not an option for most of our informants. Since many of them do not use other SNSs, their creation of safe virtual spaces is limited. Future studies could, however, explore differences between SNSs with different levels of context collapse (as well as defining those levels). For example, Twitter is not used for professional purposes at Globalcar, and LinkedIn is considered a "professional" network that *a priori* does not generate dilemmas for the stigmatized. We have explored the broad new tensions that SNSs create, but a more granular

[14] Note that recognizing the importance of work on how stigmatized employees behave is different from concluding that their image/authenticity concerns are the determining factors of their actions.

view of different platforms and their impacts on the identity work that stigmatized employees perform is necessary.

Rethinking the Outcomes of Stigmatized Employees' Identity Work

Which is best: integration or segmentation of work and stigmatized identities? Although it is far from clear where the balance lies, our study contributes to a more holistic picture of the possible outcomes. Answering recent calls for a more behavioral approach to understanding the consequences of identity management (Follmer et al., 2020), and considering the new tensions that SNSs engender, we have developed a picture of individual, interpersonal, and organizational outcomes. Therefore, it is not possible to state definitely which approach is better than the other. In fact, the best approach may not even exist. On our continuum of possibilities, employees vary widely in their appraisals and end up segmenting or integrating their identities based on what they believe is the optimal one for their particular context.

We can, nonetheless, argue that our results contest the claim of Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013) that a hybrid approach is the best option for employees. Our conclusions point in the opposite direction: the greater the efforts to adopt a half-way approach, the worse the outcomes seem to be. Even when individuals are skilled at online and face-to-face interactions, peers often realize the assiduous efforts that they are making, and SNSs can help people find out almost anything. By considering all these efforts (integration or segmentation), we challenge studies that identify strategies to avoid and significantly decrease the identity work necessary in a specific context (e.g. Alvesson & Robertson, 2016; Doldor & Atewologun, 2020). These studies argue that such strategies will provide some individual safety from "sustaining parallel, if contradictory, accounts of the stigma that buffer individuals from the customary work associated with stigma" (Doldor & Atewologun, 2020: 21).

Counterintuitively, we have shown that the outcomes may be even worse when employees attempt to reduce the amount of identity work to reflect the presence of SNSs. In fact, SNSs demand surprising amounts of effort. For example, the idea of “teflonic identity maneuvering” (cf. Alvesson & Robertson, 2016), meaning deflecting possible identity work, marginalizing questions such as “who am I?” and “what does this mean to me?” at work, is not supported by our findings. That idea neglects the adoption of minor daily identity management mechanisms, which we have found to be significant and impactful, particularly where online efforts are concerned. While we acknowledge the relevance of studying elements of the elite, as Alvesson and Robertson (2016) did, their analyses lack a deeper understanding of power relations and the social production of inequalities that is intrinsic to stigma studies. As a result, they buy into a false perception of elite identity as less constructed and stigmatized identities as more constructed.

Furthermore, studies on stigma have maintained that employees may effectively reduce the amount of identity work in specific situations (Doldor & Atewologun, 2020). Some cases in our sample initially appeared to fit a “double-think” approach (cf. Doldor & Atewologun, 2020), as when Francis attempted to hold onto the “superior” identity of professionalism. However, the fragility of this argument became evident from our observations and through the inclusion of SNSs at the center of our analyses. Francis was unable to control online information, and the default publicness (Cho, 2018) of mainstream SNSs exposed his stigma. This exposure, in turn, significantly compromised the potential advantages of successful segmentation of identities. Although asserting that his identity work was not substantial, Francis had adopted several of the mechanisms that we mapped.

In an ideal world, less identity work overall would be the most advantageous outcome. However, difficult national and organizational circumstances, in addition to possible problems in other spheres of life, create a scenario in which segmentation may bring fewer problems and integration more direct prejudice. Future studies should examine the different possibilities and outcomes we have mapped, with the aim of explaining in which contexts integration or segmentation may be more beneficial.

Implications for Practice

Globalcar increasingly expects employees to use SNSs for work-related purposes, with little consideration of the effects that this context collapse may have on stigmatized employees. Already suffering daily negative discrimination in the workplace, these employees knew that they could not rely on Globalcar for support, since it was usually unresponsive. Our study serves as a wake-up call for organizations that are attempting to implement diversity. If they are to deal effectively with complaints of bias and harassment at work, they must take seriously the possible harmful impact of SNSs when formulating anti-discriminatory policies and inclusive human resources training.

It should also be noted that we followed the progress of some employees who were open about their sexuality and were trying to make a difference at Globalcar. Posting romantic pictures online has helped stigmatized employees "normalize" their stigma, broadcasting it to the invisible online audience (cf. Bazarova & Choi, 2014). They argued that these actions have improved their mental health and interpersonal relationships and helped foster a supportive community within the company. Organizations should reduce the cone-shaped figure of fabrication, content, and audience control to create space for widening the triangle of destigmatization (Figure 9). One possibility is to use SNSs to highlight their acceptance of diversity, in collaboration with employees who are already open about their stigmas. Such actions could also institutionalize an internal support network, making a difference to employees who are not yet entirely comfortable about being their true selves at work.

Moreover, a more structured approach to diversity might mitigate the ambiguity of professionalism. If online participation is now a facet of what a "good professional" is, organizations have to break the cycle of extending workplace discrimination to this new environment. At Globalcar, for example, nine potential informants refused to participate, as they feared adverse impacts on their careers. If the organization had a structured approach for supporting stigmatized employees, and if it used its SNSs to demonstrate genuine support for diversity, employees would not be in a position that could harm their professionalism, regardless of whether they integrate or segment their identities.

Final remarks

Our study has deepened our understanding of stigma management in a world that is increasingly online, and it offers opportunities to explore in future research. For instance, factors such as race, religion, and class (cf. Cech & Rothwell, 2020) are likely to have an impact on the use of SNSs and identity work. Another possibility for future research is related to our scope. Although we worked with the idea that SNSs have blurred private and work spheres, our analysis focused primarily on the latter. Similarly, we set our study in the Latin American automotive industry, but we did not develop how the national and industrial scenarios affect identity work. Finally, future research could also seek to understand stigma and SNSs from an organization-centric perspective. According to some recent studies, social media has a significant impact on hiring (Hartwell & Campion, 2020; Korzynski et al., 2020). However, such research ignores the role of stigma. This gap in the literature opens up several opportunities for investigation.

7. The road ahead
Conclusions and possible routes

The impetus behind this doctoral study was to deepen understanding of the daily challenges in sustainability implementation at Globalcar, structured around tensions faced by the company and its employees. I was further motivated by my own experience in the automotive sector: a sector that has been significantly pressured to improve its practices after the 2015 VW Dieselgate scandal (EPA, 2020). The problem-driven nature of this thesis (Reinecke et al., 2016) led me to focus on specific cases that "emerged" during my time at Globalcar. These are far from being the only problems confronting the company. However, in my view, the cases I explored are extraordinarily relevant. In the next section, I explain the general contributions to sustainability implementation literature and specific contributions to different streams of literature. Later, I highlight some limitations and directions for future studies.

7.1 Contributions

The overall contribution of this thesis to the literature on sustainability implementation lies in its adoption of an ethnographic approach (Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009) to investigate daily tensions in sustainability at Globalcar. Taking an ethnographic approach involving listening to others, conversing with them, and observing how they carry out their activities (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019), I could capture the complexities of apparently ordinary activities. This multifaceted, in-depth approach was extremely important because many of the tensions I observed when I was in the field had intricacies that were taken for granted at the organization (Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009). With a focus on daily interactions, I could explain how tensions might remain even when managers and employees are willing and able to make changes to improve their organization.

Studies typically argue that when organizations understand and embrace tensions, a *virtuous* cycle and desired outcomes occur (Hengst et al., 2020; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Alternatively, when organizations dismiss tensions, a *vicious* cycle emerges, leading to undesired outcomes (Joseph et al., 2020; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Recent studies have suggested that this picture might not be as black-and-white as it seems, since there are many possible nuances between accepting tensions leading to constructive answers or rejecting tensions leading to defensive responses (Pinkse et al., 2019). Each of the cases I explored in this thesis contributes to bringing some nuances and reasons to why such tensions remain in sustainability implementation.

In the first case, the implementation of a sustainability report, a stakeholder matrix and several projects in other departments of the organization suggest that even with sustainability initiatives, their implementation might continue to be sidelined due to the pervasiveness of everyday organizational actions. Beyond the idea of embracing tensions without resolving them, this case also brought to light a dissociation between acknowledging and managing tensions (Pinkse et al., 2019). The organization was aware of the problems that silos cause and the strong tension between organizational and individual goals. However, in attempts to solve silos and implement sustainability, daily behaviors revealed the barriers to achieving organizational change.

Thus, this case advanced the understanding of organizations adopting an accepting-defensive approach to deal with sustainability tensions (Pinkse et al., 2019). In this view, organizations can understand the contradictions in sustainability, but ultimately protect their core management practices, rather than change them to integrate sustainability. By exploring the everyday interdepartmental interactions, I showed how routinized behaviors (Giddens, 2005) might prevent changes, even when sustainability is seen as legitimate (Hengst et al., 2020) and managers are seemingly consensual on its importance (Crilly et al., 2012). Understanding organizations as polities (Weber & Waeger, 2017), meaning agglomerates of groups with different interests and goals, this research showed the importance of looking at such daily coordination struggles, in addition to recognizing broader tensions that sustainability implementation provokes.

In the second case of (re)construction of hypocrisy, most of the extant studies argue that when tensions are salient and later dismissed, it is a sign of prevalent economic interests over social and environmental ones (Joseph et al., 2020; Smith & Lewis, 2011). This view is valid and even reinforced by this case. The graduate program is part of the social pillar in Globalcar's sustainability strategy, involving the preparation of future leaders. However, managers might have their own short-term interests (e.g. their internal and external reputations, annual bonuses) that collide with the long-term idea of preparing a new wave of leaders.

This case also examined everyday workplace tensions to explain how employees construct and feed fantasies regarding their organizations. Such fantasies may play a significant role in the perpetuation of behaviors that do not contribute to long-term sustainability objectives, even if unconsciously. More so than only rational economic interests, broader capitalist-related ideals, such as "career development" or "working in a dreamlike organization," influence one's decision-making process, leading to behaviors that satisfy immediate desires. Thus, I moved beyond the overall idea of embracing tensions in sustainability implementation (Van der Byl & Slawinski, 2015b) to focus on the repercussions of these unresolved tensions over time from the employees' perspective.

In the third case, Globalcar attempted to follow trends and pressures to implement diversity practices, but did not understand the complexities involved in such implementations at first. The daily interactions I had with employees at the organization uncovered problems that gay men face, especially in a growing online world. In this new context, this study showed how difficult it is for organizations to realize the extent and impacts of their actions thoroughly in SNSs. Online interactions are thought to be a new platform for organizational members to showcase corporate projects. Globalcar's leaders are excited about the opportunity to expose their social and environmental projects to broader audiences. Yet, exploring the affordances of SNSs (Treem & Leonardi, 2013) might reinforce prejudice and stigmatization at the organization. Stimulating online presence is almost a given in many organizations[15], but SNSs have specific characteristics that might significantly impact stakeholders that are already marginalized in face-to-face interactions. This highlights how disparate aspects of organizational life can be connected in particular tensions that sustainability creates and the need for a comprehensive approach to untangle their different facets.

Together the three cases explored in this thesis indicate that daily organizational activities mine the potential of solutions to sustainability implementation, if they are not accompanied by a careful look at how teams work. This finding diverges from other studies, that argue that organizations can "work around" tensions, eventually integrating sustainability into core business activities (Hengst et al., 2020; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). The more individuals interact and try to solve the problems they face, the more unintended consequences their actions create. In the first case, silos are reinforced, in the second, hypocrisy is maintained and in the third, gay employees are continuously uncomfortable.

Although managers understood the problems of a marginalized sustainability department at Globalcar, other issues, such as political "turf wars" (first case), obscure intersubjective processes (second case), or lack of knowledge about specific situations (third case), reveal that tensions persist. Embracing the tensions, therefore, did not lead to greater integration of sustainability initiatives. Indeed, accepting tensions without acknowledging these pervasive everyday interactions might lead to their continuation because of other reasons rather than a predisposition to alleviating them. Individually, each paper also contributes to specific streams of theory, as I have presented specific mechanisms involved in the constant tensions in each case. These are summarized in the remainder of this section.

[15] And this includes academic organizations as well, when Business Schools and Universities stimulate academics to create Twitter accounts to publicize publications, achievements and thoughts.

Boundary work in sustainability implementation

The first article in this thesis contributes explicitly to organizational boundary work studies (Langley et al., 2019) by unfolding how negotiating boundary processes emerge when silos become a problem and sustainability is not integrated into the organization's core functions. Even though Globalcar acknowledges the problems of silos and the marginalization of sustainability implementation, it is not enough to change departments' boundaries. The initiatives to break the silos cannot change other structural problems, such as incentive systems and organization design. As a result, little organizational change occurs. It is a self-perpetuating process that keeps silos as they are and limits sustainability in the organization.

Studies on organizational boundaries have shown how local conditions influence negotiated orders (Strauss et al., 1994). By focusing on the specific context of silos and sustainability implementation, I particularly identified micro-strategies that different teams and managers adopt to influence the shaping of boundaries between sustainability and other organizational functions. This answers the call for a more nuanced perspective on the "saying and doings" (Langley et al., 2019: 727) involved in boundary work, with the account of daily boundary negotiations.

As an implication, I show how broader organizational attempts at changing boundaries can coexist with daily contradictory actions from those who discursively support change, leading to the maintenance of current social orders (Allen, 2008; Strauss et al., 1994). Despite the clear actions to dissolve boundaries at the organizational level, managerial interactions show inconsistent behaviors that undermine attempts to change organizational boundaries.

A dynamic and intersubjective understanding of corporate hypocrisy

The second article of this thesis explores Globalcar's biannual graduate scheme. It answers recent calls for a more dynamic understanding of corporate hypocrisy (Christensen, Morsing, et al., 2019; Wagner et al., 2019), by analyzing it under the lenses of the psychoanalytical concepts of fantasy and symptoms, as well as Sloterdijk's (1984) concept of cynical reason. I argued that corporate hypocrisy can be (re)constructed over time when fantasies are recrafted—when employees become cynical but still participate in this process because of contextual limitations, such as a stable job in an unstable country.

This case brings implications to the literature in terms of agency, as once hypocrisy is established, actors lose control of its spread and repercussions. In terms of scope, the study moves beyond the deliberate disconnection between discourse and practice (Brunsson, 1989; Cho et al., 2015). I amplify this view and incorporate employees' perspectives. This enabled me to show how the relationship between employees and managers maintains and reproduces hypocrisy. This study also explores hypocrisy consequences. I show that quitting is a possibility, but many intricacies occur before that. Finally, this case adds fresh perspectives to critical organization studies by using psychoanalytical concepts (Arnaud & Vidaillet, 2018) to identify the cynical reason as the mechanism to recraft fantasies, thus perpetuating hypocrisy indefinitely.

Rethinking stigma management and identity work in an online world

The third case contributes to stigma management and identity work studies (Brown & Lewis, 2011; King, Mohr, Peddie, Jones, & Kendra, 2017; Stenger & Roulet, 2018) by exploring the overlap between online and face-to-face interactions. It also uncovers an identity response that I label "correspondent behavior": attempts to match face-to-face and online identity work on a continuum from integration to segmentation of work and stigmatized identities.

Given the tensions emerging from new professional expectations and online platforms characteristics, this behavior rarely brings the expected outcomes for employees, a situation which leads to new appraisals and a relentless "correspondent behavior cycle." The study recognizes the growing pervasiveness of social network sites. It reveals new tensions (online vs. face-to-face professionalism and default publicness vs. identity curation), which impedes the evaluations that employees conduct when deciding whether to disclose their stigma. The outcomes of this analysis are rarely ideal. Those who want to disclose their sexual orientation at work risk discrimination and harassment from peers, whereas those who want to conceal it may become stressed and damage their interpersonal relationships with peers and superiors.

7.2 Future avenues

This thesis was quite experimental, as the papers were sent to different journals with specific approaches, reviewer teams, editors and ideologies that made them highly divergent in some respects. Nonetheless, even with these changes and adaptations that transpired quite naturally, certain recurring aspects emerged in the everyday organizational dynamics that I was observing. I did not have the chance to explore all of them as adequately as I had hoped. However, these topics offer a promising research agenda that could help scholars and practitioners advance sustainability implementation.

One example is the influence of national politics in the implementation of sustainability. The country in which the study was undertaken was in the middle of divisive elections during my fieldwork. This context was having a significant impact on how Globalcar was dealing with more controversial topics, such as sexual minority rights. To avoid problems, the organization decided to focus on women in managerial positions only. Also, there was a rise in verbal and physical violence against minorities that did not go unnoticed, with many of my informants describing a horrifyingly toxic work environment. As this issue was unexpected, I could not fully grasp it during the development of this thesis. Hence, it offers an opportunity for future studies.

Observing daily sustainability implementation is essential to delineate the nuances of the relationship between the corporate sector and the government. As Globalcar's case suggests, governments and leaders can have a direct impact on the "momentum" to implement specific actions, incentivizing or hindering daily efforts in a way that is not transparent to an outsider when one looks at formal strategies and reports. Many other corporate sustainability topics could also be affected daily by governmental actions related to such issues as deforestation, clean energy and modern slavery, when those individuals with a mandate enforce or weaken the legislation. Thus, an ethnographic understanding of the relationship between governments and daily implementation actions in organizations can bring important implications to sustainability studies.

Another facet that is worth exploring further is the relationship between sustainability and human resources. Globalcar decided to structure its sustainability department under the HR vice-presidency because of its strong social focus. Indeed, some studies argue that this is a promising approach (DuBois & Dubois, 2012; Pellegrini, Rizzi, & Frey, 2018), as the HR department deals with a range of internal and external stakeholders. Synergies between the two are, therefore, expected. However, in my daily observations, I noticed some tensions emerging from this choice, such as the difficult relationships with more technical departments at Globalcar (e.g., engineering; environmental impact) that did not feel that HR had legitimacy to coordinate such activities. This tension was apparent tangentially in the first case of silos, when departments turned their backs on the sustainability team. However, a more thorough investigation of these tensions could generate important insights.

Finally, my daily observations at the sustainability department allowed me to get a close look at the ethical dilemmas that employees in the department had to deal with. Some prior research has underscored the role of internal activists, or social intrapreneurs (Alt & Craig, 2016; Girschik, 2020), in the development of sustainability. I believe that there is still an opportunity to explore how these employees could help alleviate sustainability tensions. For instance, in the thesis, I touched upon the tension between short and long-term corporate perspectives with the graduate scheme aimed at preparing future leaders, but the initiative was hindered by the short-term perspective of those in charge of the project. Some employees in the sustainability department were aware of this problem and tried to convince others about the necessity to look ahead instead of pursuing short-term gains. Albeit prone to failure, these individual discursive strategies to change organizational practices could add new dimensions to sustainability implementation studies.

7.3 Have the sustainability initiatives failed at Globalcar?

I would like to finish my thesis with a provocative question. Have the sustainability initiatives failed at Globalcar? After numerous problems, it is easy to conclude that the organization has failed its sustainability implementation. However, if we consider the number of projects that Globalcar conducts to address social and environmental concerns, we might have to re-examine certain aspects before concluding that the organization has failed when it comes to sustainability. Even before creating a dedicated sustainability department in 2015, the company had several environmental projects in its production lines. They were responses to issues such as waste management, energy efficiency and technological improvements. Social aspects have long been considered by the organization as well. The Globalcar foundation has more than 30 years of activities regarding community engagement and awareness, and the company is a benchmark in terms of HR benefits and retirement support.

Finally, along with their previous achievements in environmental sustainability initiatives, after my fieldwork ended, Globalcar did make some notable progress in terms of diversity. Before leaving, I presented initial results and suggestions to the HR vice-president and his team. I explained the complicated position that LGBTQIA+ employees were in. I have kept in touch with them since then.

As a follow-up action, they reached out to local NGOs that helped them structure inclusivity initiatives. They created internal committees involving several departments at the organization. Furthermore, given the recent momentum vis-à-vis diversity in the company, Sara, the sustainability analyst responsible for diversity activities, decided to be more forceful in her approach, defining bold actions and indicators. She understood the political and competitive environment at Globalcar, and she used it to motivate employees by creating small incentives for those who helped improve diversity in the organization (e.g. diversity champions and social media posts to congratulate specific managers and employees). Moreover, she stood out because her department was the first and the only one to get involved with such initiatives, giving her the internal "monopoly" on this aspect of sustainability.

However, Sara's efforts are still an isolated action. Albeit a commendable first step, they do not resolve the problem of the overall lack of integration between sustainability initiatives and the rest of the organization. It can be argued that Globalcar does not yet realize the need to broaden its scope in terms of necessary changes. In this sense, it is failing. The company fails to see that the solution is not to develop a report for the company but to rethink the organization's design. It does not recognize that creating specific indicators for women in managerial positions will not get to the core, that is, it will not improve diversity fundamentally because the topic is much more complicated than that. Furthermore, Globalcar misses the mark when it comes to the management of specific stakeholder groups (e.g. stigmatized employees, trainees), reinforcing negative views. Finally, it fails to expand its activities. The company could benefit from reaching out to external partners in other projects they conduct. Establishing such links could help it integrate and understand specificities involved in the implementations it has in hand.

Globalcar is confronting what many other organizations have also been struggling with. Specifically, societal demand for more responsible behavior has increased dramatically, whereas the tolerance for problems has decreased, especially in the automotive sector. Organizations are under pressure to structure their sustainability activities more effectively, showing their many stakeholders that they have a straightforward approach instead of many loosely joined independent initiatives. Inevitably, mistakes will occur along this journey, as evidenced in the case of Globalcar. Yet how the organization walks the rocky road of sustainability implementation seems to be more critical than dealing with problems in specific situations, without making the necessary associations between them and the broader contexts in which they are embedded. Therefore, in my analysis, I conclude that although the organization is implementing *specific* sustainability initiatives, it is failing by insisting on a superficial understanding of the multiple and complex connections between social and environmental aspects and other core organizational practices. The example of Globalcar suggests that one promising route to improving sustainability implementation is the team's ability to own new projects. Sara's successful efforts in boosting diversity actions at Globalcar may provide encouragement to sustainability teams in other organizations in similar contexts.

Owning new projects

The development of a relevant but complicated initiative at Globalcar was a valuable opportunity for Sara. In terms of relevance, diversity has gained significant attention in recent years, moving far beyond the idea of gender equality to include minorities, such as black and LGBTQIA+ employees (Buchter, 2020; Ng & Rumens, 2017). The need to consider intersectionality is also evident (Zanoni & Janssens, 2015), whereas most organizations still struggle to reach an equal number of women and men in managerial positions. Consequently, there is a dissociation between the organization's actions and society's expectations from diversity. This is an issue that sustainability teams could explore to guarantee ongoing top management support and resources.

Considering its many layers, diversity is a complicated task for organizations, yet it presents an opportunity for sustainability teams to take the lead in this process. As Globalcar's case suggest, different departments developed activities that were close to their core functions over time. Diversity, however, brings many nuances that individual departments alone could not deal with effectively. In fact, most departments would not be interested in getting involved in such a complicated implementation, opening space for a sustainability department to act. Any employees responsible for such activities should be well prepared. Sara, for example, has a graduate diploma in diversity and inclusion, which heightened her sensitivity to the many dimensions that she should consider. She occupied a position in the organization that others could not, thus avoiding political problems with other parts of the organization.

Furthermore, since diversity is a novel issue for many organizations in Latin America, sustainability can more easily own these activities without stepping into other departments' functions. At Globalcar, the sustainability team came up against obstacles in aligning social and environmental projects because some of these projects had been traditionally implemented by others. Different departments at Globalcar were already implementing social and environmental projects in isolation. However, the idea of thinking holistically about organizational activities and agglomerating them into a sustainability department was something new. In this context, diversity was not being implemented *per se* by any department, and Sara used that fact to her advantage. She moved away from competing with other teams, as they had not been involved with such activities before. Also, as a member of the HR vice-president's office, she was in a strategic position.

With a view to the future, the focus on diversity initiatives might help the sustainability team at Globalcar, as they will become protagonists in an important initiative. This could also improve their relationship with other departments of the company. As a result, the sustainability team would be better positioned to coordinate other sustainability initiatives going on in the organization, initiatives that are currently under their jurisdiction of other departments.

Although diversity might not be a widespread priority in the business world, companies could adopt similar approaches by developing projects tackling unexplored grand challenges. Other issues might be more relevant to specific organizations. For instance, some of them might interpret sustainability with a greater focus on environmental aspects, or closer to other departments, such as quality management and compliance. Also, context and pressures from stakeholders may prioritize other opportunities for sustainability implementation, such as climate change or modern slavery. These grand challenges are relevant, multifaceted and new, and the sustainability teams can become protagonists without complicating their relationships with other departments. By doing so, they may avoid many tensions in sustainability implementation.

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