Following the Organizing over Time: Focus on the Concept of Compromise

Anthony Hussenot
Associate Professor
Université Paris-Dauphine
Laboratory DRM-CNRS
anthony.hussenot@dauphine.fr

Abstract
This paper deals with the concept of compromise in organization studies. The concept of compromise is often mobilized in discourses. Nevertheless, it seems difficult to comprehend this concept, while it can help us to enhance our understanding about organization structuring. The aim is to propose a conceptual framework in order to understand the shaping of compromise, and the roles of compromises in organization. The main contribution is in the understanding of concept of compromise both as a process and a state. Compromise also understands itself as an actant mobilized and redefined in practice by actors to mediate their interaction and coordinate themselves. Thus, compromise enables and constrains interaction because it carries on irreversibility in the organizational process. From a case study based on the development of an Information System for Human Resource Management in a bank during the financial crisis, I illustrate the conceptual framework, and I discuss three roles and effects of compromises in organizational process: the importance of the first compromise in organizational process, the compromise as an ongoing update equilibrium between concession and gift, and the materialization of compromise to objective modalities.

Keywords: compromise, organizational process, coordination, Actor Network Theory.

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Introduction

The matter of the coordination in organization studies seems essential to understand the emergence of organization as process and space of collective activities. Obviously, most of the works in organization studies deal with the coordination of collective activity. For instance, works about the organizational process deal with the structuring in time of collective activities. From different approaches, the works developed by Van de Ven and Poole (1995, 2005), Pettigrew (1997), Pentland (1999), Langley (1999, 2007), Poole et al. (2000), Meyer, Gaba and Colwell (2005), Carlsen (2006), Shotter (2006) highlight the process change in time and space. Organizational process change is mostly understood as a (re)structuring process. Close to these works, the works about organizational change deal with the (re)structuring of collective activities in organization, too. From different perspectives of organizational change, change as episodic phenomenon or ongoing process (Orlikowski, 1996; Weick and Quinn, 1999; Tsoukas, 2002), change as evolutionary, dialectical, lifecycle, or teleology (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995), anticipated or emergent change (Orlikowski, 1997), change as selection, adaptation or transformation process (Demers, 2007), these works attempt to understand the dynamic of structuring of collective activity. From an organizational behavioural perspective, works about conflict developed, for part, by Thompson (1960), Thomas (1992), Jamesson (1999), Chueng and Chuah (1997), Vaaland (2004), Barki and Hartwick (2004) or researches based on resistance to change (Coch and French 1947; Lawrence 1969; Hultman 1998; Ford and al. 2008) have underlined the difficulties and the necessity of coordination to perform collective activity. At last, the main books and academic reviews in Organization Studies or Management highlight dynamics, mechanisms, problem and solutions to enhance collective activity. For instance, the handbook in organization studies edited by Hardy, Clegg, and Nord (1996) or the one edited by Tsoukas and Knudsen (2005) have focused on the structuring of the collective activity through different theories, grounds and fields. The main questions are: how do actors develop their coordination? How do actors share meanings? How have the actors set up the rules structuring the collective activities? How do actors develop practices and strategy? What is the role of environment? (Etc.) Actually, these questions can be, for part, analyzed from the compromises shaped by actors. In organization studies, compromises are the phenomenon allowing to understand the dynamic of structuring or rupturing. Nevertheless, the concept of compromise is
rarely developed in organization studies, whereas it is the condition for human coexistence, exchange, and social transaction (Nachi, 2004b).

Thus, the aim of this paper is to focus on the concept of compromise. From a review of literature in social science about compromise, this article proposes a conceptual framework of compromise anchored in the organization studies field. From the Nachi (2004a) assumption, which treats compromise as both a process and a goal to be achieved, I propose to comprehend the concept of compromise through three points. First, the compromise is analyzed as an organizational process. As an organizational process, compromise is an ongoing definition of the modalities of collective activity. This focus lens allows us to extend the compromise approach as fixed entity. Second, I consider that the compromise is an actant for actors mobilized in interaction. I argue that actors mobilize past or future expected compromises as actant. Actors deals with the past and future compromises as fixed entity anchoring the modalities of collective activity. Thus, the third assumption underlines that compromise is an actant mobilized in practices, but the modalities of collective activity are always defined and redefined in practice. Also, we need to understand the entanglement of compromise as entity and process to understand its role in organizational process.

To illustrate my theoretical assumptions, I used a case study based on the development of an Information System for Human Resource Management (Ragin, 1992, 1997; Stake, 1998; Langley and Royer, 2006). From October 2008 to February 2010, a bank, a consultant, and a research centre start a project of a competencies management device development. The contract specifies that the project has to deliver a pilot version of this competencies management tool to two services of the bank. In this project, there are many stakeholders like engineers, consultants, researchers, managers, or collaborators from different organizations and services. Obviously, each actor and organization have their own logic, constrains, and objectives in this partnership. How can these different actors and organizations, from different sectors, get results? How have they sealed satisfactory compromises? I have observed during 12 months, and collected documents during 16 months, in order to understand the formation of compromises as a daily activity.
The paper is structured as follows: the first section presents a literature review of the concept of compromise. This literature review shows that the concept of compromise has been studied from long time ago in social sciences, but there are very few works in Organization Studies. Moreover, the definitions are contradictory, the approaches are quite different, and there are lot of concepts closes to the concept of compromise. From this literature review, I develop the theoretical framework. Based on the Actor Network Theory approach (Callon 1986, 2001; Law 1992; Akrich, Callon, and Latour 2002a,b; Latour 1988, 2005; Akrich, Callon and Latour 2006), the conceptual framework comprehends, firstly, the concept of compromise as both process and actant allowing the structuring of collective activity, and, secondly, as a mediator in interaction empowering and constraining the practices. The second section outlines the case study, the method and the factual description. This case study illustrates the conceptual framework from empirical evidence. The third section discusses the concept of compromises from an organization studies focus lens. I highlight three structuring effects of compromise in the organizational process, and their consequences.

1/ The concept of compromise

The concept of compromise has been studied from the beginning of social sciences. To Papilloud and Rol (2004), the study of compromise was based on the precocious works of Viscount Morley (1874). Then, this concept was studied by many majors authors in social sciences as Simmel (1989, 1992, 1999), Durkheim (1995), and Habermas (1992, 1996). Actually, the literature can be shared in three approaches: authors thinking compromise as entity, authors thinking compromise as process, authors thinking compromise as process (Coady, 1991; Ollagnon, 2004), and authors who propose to go past the concept of compromise (Parker Follet, 1924). Except of a few authors who have understood the compromise as a process (Coady, 1991; Ollagnon, 2004), most of the works deals with the compromise as a state. Compromise as a state means that actors seal compromises in order to define and stabilize their relationship, whereas thinking compromise as process means that the definition of the relationship is an ongoing process.

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2 To an overview about the concept of compromise, see the special issue of Social Science Information, vol.43, n°2.
3 Considering that I focus on organization, I do not deal with the individual or behavioral approaches of compromise.
Compromise as entity

This first approach is structured in two parts: there are authors arguing that compromise is a possible equilibrium (Habermas, 1996), and other authors thinking that compromise is impossible (Durkheim, 1995). Habermas (1996) distinguishes the concept of consensus and the concept of compromise. To Habermas (1992, 1996), any social order needs coordination. Habermas (1996) proposes two ideal types of agreements according to the type of action: axiological or interest. An axiological action leads to a consensus. Actors look for an entente about norms and values, i.e., what they share. Conversely, an interest action leads to a convention. Convention is defined from negotiations about the interests of actors. Actors look for a compromise, which is the equilibrium of interests. Then, Habermas (1996) distinguishes the spontaneous negotiations, which are not constrained by formal or legal rules, and the regulation negotiations, which are defined by prerogatives. At last, Habermas (1996) underlines the role of values in compromises. Any stable compromise has to find a valued justification.

Others authors have rejected the concept of compromise, either because the compromise is an impossible social phenomenon (Durkheim, 1995), or of moral consideration. According to Durkheim (1995), the society organizes the relationship before any compromise between various groups. Also, the relationships are contractual. These contracts organize the relationship, but the birth of social rules cannot appear from the negotiation of various groups. Also, the society compels actors to act, to concede, to do compromises, to consider a superior interest than theirs during the negotiations. Thus, there is no free negotiation allowing a sealing of compromise (Kuty and Nachi, 2004). According to Nachi (2004a), the concept of compromise is often rejected because of moral considerations. Compromise can be comprehended as an abdication and concession by some actors in aid of the other actors: “at first glance, the idea of compromise can seem to have pejorative overtones and may inspire in some mistrust or even rejection, as though it inevitably implied “abdication” or “dishonourable concession”, “unprincipled compromise” (Nachi, 2004a). As Pétrocivi (1937) says “it is a phenomenon perpetually condemned in theory and always used in practice” (Pétrocivi, 1937, p.736, in Nachi, 2004a). Also, a reflection about the concept of compromise has to consider the ethical dimension.
Compromise as process

Compromise, as an organizational process, deals with the role of compromise in the course of the organization. In this approach, the compromise is a process striving to define the relationship, and not a fixed entity structuring unmovable relationship. Simmel (1992) proposes a framework based on three concepts: Wechselwirkung, Vergesellschaftung, and exchange. Wechselwirkung calls to mind the idea of reciprocity. This reciprocity changes in its process, its effects, and is equally unstable: “in short, Wechselwirkung describes a force or drive of relations” (Papilloud and Rol, 2004, p.207). Vergesellschaftung refers to the social forms of communication organizing the drives: “these forms are points of reference, guide lines by which people commit themselves to one another in order to realize a social life and a personal life” (Papilloud and Rol, 2004, p.207). At last, exchange symbolizes the connection of social relation. To Simmel (1989), exchange is the most universal expression of society as relations: “it symbolizes the movement of Wechselwirkungen, whose function is the concrete manifestation of society in and by the internal connection of social relations” (Papilloud and Rol, 2004, p.208). Compromise is the concept pivot joining Wechselwirkung and exchange. To Simmel (1999), compromises ensure the renewal and the variations of the possibilities of association. Also, the compromise is a “resource” which allows developing a variety of possible worlds according to their ways of constructing and maintaining relations (Papilloud and Rol, 2004).

To Coady (1991), the compromise is inscribed in a process of negotiation between different actors which have an interest to collaborate together: “a compromise is a sort of bargain in which several agents who see advantages in co-operative efforts of some sort agree to proceed in a way that requires each of them to surrender, perhaps only temporarily, some of their ends, interests or policies, in order to secure others” (Coady, 1991, p.380, in Nachi, 2004a). To Ollagnon (2006), the concept of compromise deals with the exchange between actors in order to define a framework of collaboration: “the concept of compromise refers to a symbolic exchange organizing the mutual relationships of parties while recognizing the otherness. It facilitates bringing individual perspectives together, without fusing viewpoints. Thus compromise permits the emergence of an intersubjective organization of the real, while defining the context of that emergence. In this sense, it is at once the creator and the regulator of social reality” (Ollagnon, 2006, p.307).
Attempts to go past the concept of compromise

Parker Follet (1924, in Graham, 1998) proposes to go past the notion of compromise to the notion of integration. Parker Follet (1924) was a pioneer in the field of management theory. According to Parker Follet (1924), the diversity and conflict are life. Everybody wins while there are different points of view about something. Neither good nor bad, conflicts are the manifestation of diversity. The problem is that we often deal with the result of conflict in terms of winner or loser. From the concept of integration, Parker Follet (1924) explains that a good compromise is not a boundary solution between different individual interest, but a new solution about something, built by the stakeholders. Contrary to the compromise involving mutual concession, or a winner and a loser, the integration is a new solution which satisfies all the stakeholders. This approach is close to the Ricoeur (1991) definition of the concept of compromise. According to the author, a compromise entails a satisfactory status for all the stakeholders: “there is no confusion in compromise, as there is in dishonourable concession. In compromise, each party remains in his or her place, no one is despoiled of his or her order of justification” (Ricoeur, 1991, p.2, in Nachi, 2004a). His definition of the concept of compromise includes an ethical dimension, which allows a distinction between an ideal typical compromise and other type of coordination or compromises.

At last, others authors have developed many approaches closed to the concept of compromise. For example, to Arnsperger and Picavet (2003), the concept of compromise is between the notions of modus vivendi and consensus. The concept of compromise is less than a consensus but more structured than the concept of modus vivendi. Li (1997) deals with the notion of compromise as a step before harmony. Sanver and Sanver (2004) try to define the efficiency in the degree of compromise. Mc Nary (2003) highlights the confusion between the notion of compromise and the notion of win-win. Simon (1955) deals with the process of decision as a way to find a compromise. To Crozier (1964), the negotiation allows the compromise. Reynaud (1978) purposes the concept of regulation to emphasize the coordination. Latour (2005) deals with the closure of controversies to highlight the stabilization of associations in a socio-technical network. In spite of these all-out theoretical developments, Nachi (2004a,b) and Papilloud and Rol (2004) observe that the concept of compromise is a mistrust concept which is rarely studied but often rejected.
1.2/ Compromise as organizational process: towards a conceptual framework

The short literature review underlines that most of authors deal with the concept of compromise according to a philosophical, a sociological, a juridical, or a political approach. Except Parker Follet (1924), works about the concept of compromise in the field of Organization Studies are rare. However, whatever the approaches, the concept of compromises help us to understand the process structuring the relationship and the exchange. More precisely, this concept seems incontrovertible to understand the structuring of collective activity. For instance, the success or failure of project management, innovation, or change management can be understood, for part, from the compromises. The understanding of compromise, either as a state, either as a process, can help researchers and actors to observe and explain the production and reproduction of rules and practices in the development of emergent activity or stable activity. Based on Actor Network Theory assumptions (Callon 1986; Law 1992; Akrich, Callon, and Latour 2002a,b, 2006; Latour 1988, 2005; Law, 1992), I develop a theoretical framework in order to define and characterize the concept of compromise in an organizational process approach.

An Actor-Network approach of compromise

Actor Network Theory (ANT) has evolved from a large number of case studies on the sociology of science and innovation processes, such as the development of electric cars (Callon 1980), research process in laboratories (Latour and Woolgar 1986) and the launching and construction of subways (Latour 1996). Later, ANT had become a general theory to understand society. The book of Latour (2005), *Reassembling the social*, signals this evolution. Since the early 1990s, researchers in organization studies considered ANT as an attractive theory for studying organizational processes. Actor-Network Theory has been used in various organization studies: professionalism in hospitals (Dent 2003), anomalies (Bloomfield and Vurdubakis 1999), consultancy (Bloomfield and Best 1992; Legge 2002), communities of practice (Fox 2000), organizational safety (Gherardi and Nicolini 2000), knowledge management (Hull 1999), innovation (Harrisson and Laberge 2002), economic markets (Callon and Muniesa 2005), corporate greening (Newton 2002), academic communities (Hardy, Phillips and Clegg 2001), organizing (Czarniawska and Hernes 2005), critical issues (Whittle and Spicer 2008), technology.

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4 To extend the literature review, see: Smith (1942), Hallowell (1944), Mc Carthy (1957), Golding (1979), Kurlik (1979), Pennock and Chapman (1979), and Boltanski and Thévenot (2006).
5 Literature review inspired by Whittle and Spicer (2008).
studies (Joerges and Czarniawska 1998; Munir and Jones 2004), information technology implementation (Bloomfield and Vurdubakis 1994; Bloomfield 1995; Doorewaar and Van Bijsterveld 2001; Hussenot 2008), information systems and strategy (Walsham 1997; Hanseth and Aanestad 2004; Tatnall and Burgess 2005; Gao 2005; Sarker et al. 2006; Standforth 2006; Heeks and Standforth 2007). This theory examines associations of actors and objects, producing and reproducing networks in time. The aim is to understand how actors and actants evolve to produce and reproduce the social. Thus, any organizational process can be defined as a succession and transformation in which a series of humans and non-humans are in relations. For instance, scientific developments, projects, tests, experiments, and scientific knowledge are understood through controversies and negotiations leading to the evolution of associations in the socio-technical network, and a temporary stabilization according to the point of view of actors (Latour 1988). The aim of ANT is to describe the associations and how they are formed, that is to say, the 'translation' between heterogeneous elements in the network (humans, objects, etc.).

**Compromise as both process and state**

For the Actor Network Theory (Law, 1992; Callon, 2001; Akrich, Callon and Latour, 2002a,b; Latour, 2005), a compromise is understood as the closure of a controversy. Compromise allows associations between actors and objects in a socio-technical network (Latour, 2005), and coordination within the socio-technical network. Associations define the linkage between actors and objects, and the modalities of their interactions. Nevertheless, these associations are invisible for the researchers. They only appear when a controversy is deployed (Callon, 2001). Controversy can be defined as anything affecting interaction. Callon (1986) defines the controversy as a dissident action, calling into question the associations in socio-technical networks. In order to describe associations, the researcher has to follow controversies. At the closure of controversy, new associations are defined, which allow renewing the coordination. Compromise can also be defined as the condition for a stable association allowing the collective activity. Thus, the concept of compromise is both a process and a goal to be achieved. The compromise is a process creating the conditions of a satisfactory coordination from a controversy. The process of compromise is the process of association. It is an ongoing process, because actors define and redefine their modalities of association in practice. However,
modalities of interaction are never sealed, just temporary stabilized from the point of view of actors. Association always evolves throughout time, even if actors have to reproduce routines.

But compromise is a state, too, because it can be understood as a non-human actant playing a role in interaction. This process of negotiation becomes a state in the relationship, because actors can mobilize previous compromises in their discourses. A past compromise, differently interpreted by each stakeholder, is an abstract actant playing a role of mediator. It is mobilized by actors in their discourses and practices. Past compromises enable and constrain interaction, but future compromise is a goal to be achieved to perform the collective activity and get results. As a past event and a goal, compromise is an entity for actors, in spite of the interpretation and reinterpretation of these past and future compromises in time. Also, compromises carry on both irreversibility and growing or loosing profit sharing for the stakeholders (Callon, 1986). These assumptions come from the earlier works of the Actor-Network Theory developed to illustrate scientific project or innovation process (Callon, 1986; Akrich, Callon, and Latour, 2002 a,b). Thus, it seems relevant to mobilize these concepts to deal with compromise as process. The irreversibility is due to the constraint impulse by the compromise. Each compromise takes the project further on a path, because of the interaction patterns and the previous choices. In practice, actors have to take into consideration their previous compromises. For example, the compromise about the project organization is sealed from the compromise about the partnership contract. But, the compromise about project organization has to take into consideration the evolution of the representation of the partnership contract. The profit sharing is the dynamic in which stakeholders find either more and more, or less and less, interest to collaborate together. Each complete compromise leads to a reinforcement of collaboration. Conversely, the absence of compromise leads to a decrease of profit sharing for some actors.

As a non-human actant, compromise constitutes a mediator between stakeholders allowing the association. Compromise is an abstract and/or a physical entity which is built by actors. From negotiation, stakeholders develop a mediator which contains the modalities of association: this is a compromise. Compromise as state is close to the definition of boundary object: “These objects may be abstract or concrete. They assume different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation” (Star and Griesemer, 1989, p.393). As the boundary object, the structure of
compromise is common enough in spite of the evolution of modalities in practice. Actors define modalities of compromise in practice. In spite of these modalities evolving over time and being deployed only in practice, the actors talk about their compromise as stable entity. The next section illustrates the ambivalence of the concept of compromise, and shows that this ambivalence is the condition to structure the collective activity.

2/ Empirical illustration

The case takes place in a project of development of an Information System of Human Resources Management in a bank in Luxembourg. In September 2008, the financial crisis called into question the policy of recruitment in banks. For many years, banks have employed many new collaborators, but the collapse of financial markets stopped new recruitments. In this context, the Banca aims to avoid redundancies and improve the competencies management. Actually, the Banca tried to enhance the career management without getting satisfactory results. As a consequence, the Banca has negotiated a partnership with the CSU (Competencies Science Unit), and a consultant, in order to develop a tool of competencies management. More than a simple tool, the aim is to develop a device including managers, collaborators, human resources staffs, many management tools, process and uses, and a model of competencies. The main actors of this project are: the Banca, the CSU, and a consultant. The partnership started in September 2008 to finish in February 2010.

The Banca is a medium-sized bank specialized in the private banking. The strategy is the anchoring on the local market with an opening on the international, and a prudent management trust. This bank has undergone some radical change in recent years due to the financial crisis in 2009, and the implementation of Avaloq software, which is a universal banking platform, covering banking processes. To develop the Information System for Human Resources Management, the Banca has collaborated with the CSU. The CSU is a research centre located in Luxembourg, specialized, for part, in the Information and Communication Technology and Management. It develops both fundamental and applied research as the development of tools and methods. At last, the consultant is a freelance consultant specialized in Human Resource Management. He knows the Banca very well because he worked for Banca as assistant of the Human Resources Manager during 6 years.
2.1/ Method: a case study

The findings reported in this paper are anchored on the research strategy of the case study (Yin, 2003). Case study approach allows focusing and concentrating the inquiry on a case in order to provide precise details (Stake, 2005; Langley and Royer, 2006). I have followed this case during 16 months from October 2008 to February 2010. Comprehending the evolutions of negotiations and compromises requires using a research method that provides data that is both rich in contextual information and deep in understanding (Pettigrew, 1990). Cases about project management offer interesting grounds to study compromise because of the importance of coordination between actors. Project management can be observed as an organizational process leading actors to develop sharing practices, rules in order to obtain results. In any project, actors are quite different from each other, because of the transversal nature of project. To succeed in a project, one needs different jobs, positions, companies, lines of business, etc. Thus, actors of projects have to negotiate and seal compromises in order to coordinate their actions and to find the best findings according to the actors. Because of the aim is to illustrate and extend the conceptual framework from the case study, this case study has an instrumental role (Stake, 1998).

Data collection

Data was gathered in stages. At the very beginning of the study (December 2008), I have conducted 31 semi-structured interviews of about 1 hour for each one. The aim was to understand the human resources practices in the bank in order to understand the context of the project. I have focused only on the human resources practices in the bank because I had understood, first, the relationship between collaborators, managers and human resources staff, and second, the human resources management tools and practices in the bank. Three persons were in charge of these interviews: the Project Manager, a consultant, and me. We had interviewed 3 members of the human resources department (human resources chief executive, assistant human resources chief executive, and training manager), 9 managers and 19 collaborators of 2 departments of the bank (Investment Found Department and Legal Department). The interview grid was structured around 7 themes: workforce management, enculturation, training and competencies assessment, advancement and mobility, work life
management, and involvement in decision making. 27 interviews were recorded and transcribed. Then, interviews were coded with Nvivo software. The coding grid respected the 7 themes.

From 15\textsuperscript{th} October 2008 to 27\textsuperscript{th} August 2009, I have done participant observations. I have participated in 40 meetings. The project was organized in three types of meeting: (1) working meeting composed by Project Manager, consultant, and researcher; (2) project committee organized either in the bank, either in the CSU, composed of the responsible for a project in one of the institutions, the Project Manager, the consultant, and the researcher; and (3) the steering committee composed of all the responsible of the project, the Project Manager, many collaborators of the bank, many managers of the bank, the consultant, and the researcher. Each meeting was transcribed in order to note the topics, the main ideas, the main decisions, and to gather many quotes of actors. My operational role was to help project members to define the management tool of competencies management. Thus, I participated in building the management tool. Nevertheless, the aim was to follow the organizational process and not to find a convenient management tool for the bank. That is why this study is anchored in the field of case study. I have taken care to notice most of my operational interactions and actions during the project in order to take into account my role in the findings. I observed and participated in at lot of informal conversations about the Banca project during breaks, phone calls, lunches, etc. Thus, all the informal conversations and observations about the projects were noticed in a research log. Moreover, I have noted in the research log all the methodological aspects of the study, and my first intuitions and findings. I have started the research log from the first day of the case study (the 15\textsuperscript{th} October 2009), but I have been going on to notice all about the project after my participant observation period. Moreover, I have collected most of the mails exchanged and files attached during the project, from 15\textsuperscript{th} October 2008 to February 2010. Every day, the Project Manager forwarded to me the mails about the project. Thus, I have collected about 310 mails and 190 files attached edited or received by the Project Manager from October 2009 to February 2010. From my departure of the CSU in September 2009, I was not able to pursue my participant observation, but I have been collecting mails and documents about the project. These documents allow following the project during the definition of the requirements steps.

Data analysis
The data analysis is structured around 3 main phases: the coding of corpus coming from participant observations and documents, the sharing of interpretations about the project between actors and researchers through the writing of memo, and the data triangulation enhancing the trustworthiness of the analysis.

I have used Nvivo Software to transcribe and code the data corpus. Actually, Nvivo is the main tool. During participant observations, I was able to use my computer directly, and Nvivo to transcribe the interactions between actors in live. Thus I have collected, compiled, and analyzed data at the same time. I have coded the corpus early, in order to highlight the main topics appearing in the meetings and mails. During meetings, actors tackled many topics. Thus, 14 nodes were defined from October 2009 to June 2009 in order to first classify data for each topic, and to highlight the links between the different topics. These nodes are: operational actions of researchers, behavioural competencies, context of project from CSU point of view, context of project from Banca point of view, context of project from the consultant point of view, method and analysis of interviews, job card, structure and practices of the bank, competencies management model, balanced score card, competencies management tools, uses of the Information System for Human Resources Management, continuation of project, operational method. Obviously, this first set of nodes had to structure the corpus around the main topics, and to reduce data, in order to building an overview of the project. Jarzabkowski (2008) notes that the data reduction process is often used by qualitative researchers with mass data (Strauss and Corbin, 2007). From this first descriptive coding, the next step of analysis will generate conceptually abstracted codes.

At the same time of the first coding step, I have written a descriptive and chronological story of project (Langley, 1999). This memo deals with the steps of the project, the main point of view of actors (with quotes), and the main decisions. The aim was to ensure the sharing of interpretation about the case. Validating interpretations about events step by step avoid an a posteriori rationalization by actors and researchers about the project. In July 2009, I have sent a first version of the memo to some actors (Project Manager, engineer, responsible for the project in the CSU, and the consultant). They agreed with the proposed interpretation about the sequence of events from October 2009 to July 2009. Also, comparing the interpretations with the actors’ points of view ensures that the statements are reliable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).
At last, using these data-collection instruments, I based my results on data triangulation (Campbell and Fiske, 1959). Data triangulation is defined as a combination of data in order to improve the plausibility of results. The aim is to highlight, firstly, the numbers of occurrences for a specific node, and secondly, to check these occurrences of a node in various data-collection instruments (mails, observations, documents).

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<th>Methodological steps</th>
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<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>31 interviews in November 2008 about the human resources practices in the Banca</td>
<td>27 interviews were transcribed and coded with Nvivo from 7 themes: workforce management, enculturation, training and competencies assessment, advancement and mobility, work life management, involvement in decision making</td>
<td>Understand the human resource rules and practices of the bank, and the context of the project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant observation</td>
<td>40 formal meetings from October 2008 to September 2009 and numerous informal conversations in the bank and the CSU</td>
<td>Meetings were transcribed in live, and informal conversations and observations were transcribed in a research log. Transcription of formal meetings and research log were integrated in Nvivo and coded.</td>
<td>Following the process everyday close to actors of projects</td>
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<td>Document collection</td>
<td>310 mails and 190 attached files were collected</td>
<td>All mails and attached files were classified by date and integrated in Nvivo and coded</td>
<td>Following the process from the documents produced by actors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memo</td>
<td>Document summarizing the case, the main subjects, matters, the main decision making, and the main opinions of actors</td>
<td>To confront interpretations of researcher and interpretations of actors about the Banca case study</td>
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Table 1: methodological steps in the Banca case study

2.2/ From competencies management device to the development of an Information System for Human Resource

The idea of the collaboration has started in August 2007. At the beginning of project, actors did not know one another, and they had dreaded to work together. For example, at the end of the first meeting, before the signature of the agreement (September 2008), the consultant and the Banca team did not understand the engineers and researchers of CSU. According to the consultant, the discourse was too abstract.
“Even if I followed more closely than the other people, when I got out of the meeting, I did not understand the job of the CSU”⁶ (the consultant, working meeting, October 24th 2008).

At the end of the first meetings, the responsible for Banca did think highly of the CSU, but he was not convinced by the CSU proposal. Moreover, the modalities of the future collaboration stayed undefined. They wanted to work together in order to develop a competencies management tool, but neither the CSU nor the Banca had an idea about the technical and organizational expectations of this project. The below extract of discussion during a working meeting in November 2008 highlights the difficulties to define the aim of the project at the beginning.

A collaborator of the CSU⁷ : “What do you want to do, exactly?”
The Project Manager « a device for staff mobility. »
A collaborator of the CSU: « yes, I know, but what is the aim? Why Banca have to work on staff mobility? What are they looking for? »
The consultant: « Actually, there is something else than the mobility.”
The Project Manager: “This device will allow knowing the competencies better”.
(Working meeting, the November 7th 2008)

Actually, the collaboration was supported by the chief executives of organizations. Without this political will the Banca, the CSU, and the consultant would not have worked together. Obviously, the competencies management project was important for the Banca, but there are a lot of organizations, like consulting groups, skilled to develop a competencies management tool. Moreover, this kind of relationship is a first experience as for the Banca as the CSU. The Banca works with consulting groups most of the time, to solve managerial matters. According to the CSU, the competencies management tool should have been developed by the two partners. At the very beginning of the relationship, actors did not share the same interpretation about the modalities of collaboration. For the Banca, the operational objective came first: Banca had to

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⁶ « Même si j’ai suivi un peu plus que les autres, en sortant de là, je ne comprenais toujours pas ce que le PRC faisait » (the Consultant, working meeting, October 24th 2008).
⁷ A collaborator of the CSU : « Vous voulez faire quoi exactement? »
The Project Manager « Un dispositif qui servira pour la mobilité des personnes. »
A collaborator of the CSU : « Oui mais quel est l’objectif derrière cette mobilité? Pourquoi la Banca a besoin de travailler sur la mobilité? Qu’est ce que cela doit leur permettre? »
The Consultant : « En fait, ce n’est pas seulement la mobilité qui est en jeu. »
The Project Manager: « Cela doit permettre d’avoir une meilleure visibilité de leur compétence. »
(Working meeting, November 7th 2008)
develop a tool for management competencies, while the CSU wanted to develop both managerial and scientific output. For the Banca, the aim was to obtain a competency management tool, whereas for the CSU, the aim was to develop knowledge. For the project members, the first step was to define the objective and the finality of the project. After negotiations, an agreement was signed in September 2008. In addition, actors have specified the project through a second document named “project proposal – synoptic form” specifying strategic alignment of the project, the objectives, the risks, the budget, the feasibility study, the intellectual properties, the deliverables, the methodology, and the task descriptions. From these documents, actors were able to determine their mutual vision and their reciprocal responsibilities. Thus, the first operational step was the organization of the project. In November 2008, a balanced scorecard was drawn up to organize and follow the project. For the consultant, the objective was the satisfaction of the Banca managers with as little mobilization of employees as possible. The CSU hoped to use its previous works and a precise scientific methodology in order to publish the case study. The CSU had various constraints: to produce both scientific knowledge and an operational tool. In addition, the CSU must manage the project according to the ISO 9001:2008 quality norm because of its certification. At last, the Banca hoped that the project would not mobilize their employees too much. Moreover, the project must not scare the employees. The financial crisis produced tensions. According to the human resources manager, employees of Banca were afraid of layoff. However, the financial crisis led to giving up the competencies management project because of the stop of recruitment.

“Banks are starting to manage human resources. Until now, it was really easy to obtain competencies. The financial crisis has changed the situation” (the Human Resources Manager, project committee, February 19th 2009).

Thus, the aim is to develop and implement a pilot of competencies management device to the end of September 2009 nearby 2 services: Investment Fund Department and Lawfulness Department. Then, the bank will deploy this tool in the entirely bank.

**Building a shared representation of the competencies model**

8 « Les banques commencent aujourd'hui à faire de la GRH. Jusqu'à présent, nous avons uniquement claqué des doigts pour obtenir les compétences nécessaires. Avec la crise, les choses ont changé » (the Human Resources Manager, project committee, February 19th 2009).
From the firsts meetings, the definition of competency and competency management was an important topic for actors. More precisely this work started on October 23rd 2008. According to actors, definition of the notion of competency, and thus, the model of competency management were the heart of the project.

“According to me, the competencies model will be the heart of the matter. We have to have time to explain. The model must seem simple. The model should be validated by the steering committee. Even if there is no steering committee in January, we have to organize one. We cannot go on the development of the pilot model without the validation by the steering committee. This is the heart of the device, everybody has to understand that”

(Consultant, working meeting, December 10th 2008).

Obviously, stakeholders had got different approaches about the notion of competency and the competency management. The CSU had an approach rather based on the resources, while Banca and the consultant had an approach rather oriented on the function of the company’s employees. Thus, two main approaches confronted each other: the competencies management from the task (what are the tasks that the employee must do?) and the competencies management from the resources (what does the employee do to achieve his / her job?). These approaches are quite different. Moreover, actors had to define lot of concepts, like competencies, tasks or activity, and they had to negotiate the articulation of these concepts in the model. From on October 23rd 2008 through on December 18th 2008, actors have disputed to define a common approach about competencies management. Also, actors conceptualized a first model on December 18th 2008 during a committee meeting. This first model articulated individual competencies and collective competencies. However, during the committee meeting, actors formulated their doubts and comments about this first model. More precisely, some actors were afraid of a possible confusion between behavioural competencies and personal value of actors, and the collective activity and collective competencies. At last, there was a problem about the representation of the seniority of actors.

9 « Pour moi, le modèle des compétences sera le point d’orgue. Il faut que l’on prenne le temps, qu’on leur explique. Il faut que le modèle leur apparaisse simple. Le modèle que l’on retiendra devra être validé par le comité de pilotage. Même s’il n’y a pas de comité de pilotage en janvier, il faudra en faire un. Il n’est pas envisageable de poursuivre la conception du pilote sans la validation par le comité de pilotage. C’est le cœur du dispositif, il faut que chacun le comprenne » (Consultant, working meeting, December 10th 2008).
Responsible of Investment Fund Department\textsuperscript{10} : Sometimes, there are some people who start as junior and change their tasks when they become senior, while the function stays the same”.

Human Resource Manager: « Because the collective agreement takes into consideration these distinctions, it is important ».

Senior Advisor of Investment Fund Department: “For a same function, we should have a different job form, according to the seniority”. (Steering Committee, December 18th 2008).

From the committee meeting of on December 18\textsuperscript{th} 2008 to the committee meeting of February 19\textsuperscript{th} 2009, actors went on the debate about the competencies model. The main consequence of the debate was the renouncement to take into consideration the collective competencies. At this step, the question about the representation of behavioural competencies stayed open. CSU and Banca wanted to find a representation of behavioural competencies, but none met the demands. Debates about behavioural competencies had proceeded until July 2009. Finally, CSU and Banca decided that Banca needed to test personality. After examining the different tools available on the market, the Banca chose AssessFirst solution. Concerning the technical competencies, the Banca accepted to define these from an interactive work between the manager, who expresses what he expects for a specific job, and the collaborator, who defines what he does to perform his job. However, the notion of competencies was not clearly defined. During the project, there will have been a lot of other debates about this notion without finding a shared definition.

\textbf{From competencies model to competencies management device}

After defining a first version of the competencies model, the CSU and the consultant presented, on March 10\textsuperscript{th} 2009, a first model of the competencies management device. This first model of the device highlighted the competencies model and the main uses of this tool for the bank: competencies identification, competencies management, training, employee mobility, and recruitment. The aim was to provide an overview about the uses of the future device.

\textsuperscript{10} Responsible of Investment Fund Department : « Parfois on a le cas de personnes qui entrent junior et sénior ils changent d'activité. Pourtant la fonction reste la même ».

Human Resource Manager: « C'est d'autant plus important que la convention collective reprend ces distinctions ».

Senior Advisor of Investment Fund Department: « Pour une même fonction, on pourrait avoir différents descriptifs selon l'ancienneté ». (Steering Committee, December 18th 2008).
“This is a first mediation object in order to discuss about the future device. The aim is to share a same representation. This document will allow us to redefine the project later“.

(The Project Manager, Project Committee CSU, March 10th 2009).

To concretize this device, the competencies model was materialized into a job form. This job form appeared as the central element of the device. Actually, the main aim was to capture individual competencies, while the main use was the mobility of collaborators. The mobility was the first use expressed by the Banca from the beginning of the project. Due to the recruitment stop and the demand of employees to evolve to other positions, the Banca had to propose modalities of mobility. Nevertheless, it was a strong evolution for the bank. According to the human resources manager, this device may have changed the human resources practices, and it had to respect the identity of the bank.

The Human Resource Manager: “we have to take into consideration the identity of the bank. We are aware that we have to surpass a system based on judgment, but we want to decide on the evolution of people”.

The Project Manager: “We have to tell people that to evolve, they must express that”.

The Human Resource Manager: “We want to valorise the motivation. The people must express their will. We never talk about career evolution during the job interview. It does not work like this at the bank”.

(Project Committee Banca, April 1st 2009)

Concretization of the competencies management device: the job form and the pilot

The elaboration of the competencies management devices was useful to share meanings and representations, but actors need to concretize theirs thoughts, especially the bank, which desired a handy tool. From the very beginning, the engineers and the consultant illustrated their

11 C'est un premier objet de médiation afin de pouvoir échanger sur ce qui sera le dispositif. L'idée est bien de partager une même représentation. Le cas échéant, ce document pourra servir pour redéfinir le projet » (The Project Manager, Project Committee CSU, March 10th 2009).

12 The Human Resource Manager: « Il faut être très conscient de l'identité de la banque. On est conscient que l'on doit dépasser un système basé sur le jugement mais on veut rester maître de décider des évolutions des personnes ». The Project Manager : « Il faut dire aux gens que s'ils veulent évoluer, ils doivent se manifester ».

The Human Resource Manager : « Nous on veut valoriser la motivation. C'est à la personne de se manifester. On ne parle pas d'évolution de carrière dès l'entretien d'embauche. Ça ne marche pas comme cela à la Banca ». (Project Committee Banca, April 1st 2009).
theoretical development. For instance, the first model, presented during the first committee meeting of on December 18th 2008, was illustrated by the bank Agency competencies description. The bank gave heed to be concrete.

“Could you, when you send the new model, update the example “agency” so that we are able to evaluate the feasibility and the logic of the new proposition? Considering the credibility of the project, the illustration has to notice relevant elements only (bad example: to be efficient)”13. (Responsible for training of the Banca, email sent to consultant and the CSU, January 6th 2009).

After the first committee meeting, the CSU and the consultant started the definition of a job form summarizing the model in order to test it nearby collaborators and managers of the bank. The job form was the core documents of the devices. To ensure the definition of a suitable job form, the stakeholders had to test various versions of job forms nearby bank collaborators. From on February 13th 2009 through on April 16th 2010, stakeholders had drawn 10 versions of the job form. These first tests highlight lot of problems to represent the variety of situations, jobs, and competencies. During the meetings and the tests, 11 versions of representation and classification were underlined during the definition of the job form: articulation of technical competencies and IFBL training (IFBL is an organization delivering trainings for the banking trade); articulation of job groups and ranks (ranks depends on the seniority and not only on the competencies or the job group); full time / part time; degree of autonomy and indicator to evaluate the time to become autonomous; job promotion and indicators to justify promotions; technical competencies explanations; course of study; managerial competencies; and behavioural competencies. Thus, the job form emerged through interaction between collaborators, engineers of the CSU, the consultant, and the human resources staff of the Banca. Actually, the job form should have materialized the competencies model, but the content emerged from interactions with managers and collaborators.

13 « Pouvez-vous, lors de l’envoi de la nouvelle modélisation, ajuster également l’illustration "Agence" de manière à ce que nous puissions visualiser tout de suite la faisabilité/logique de la nouvelle proposition? Il faudrait en effet, pour la crédibilité du projet, que l’illustration ne contienne que des éléments pertinents (contre ex: être efficient...) » (Responsible for training of the Banca, email sent to Consultant and the CSU, January 6th 2009).
“The content of the job form has emerged from itself. We carefully respected the description of each collaborator about the competencies for their function”.14 (The consultant, Project Committee Banca, April 6th 2009).

In spite of the interactions, some people were not satisfied about the job form. More precisely, there was confusion about notions used, as job description and competencies, and the doubt about the development of a suitable competencies management device. In May 2009, the project team defined many job forms coming from the Investment Fund Department and Legal Department services. These job forms were a first concretization of the future competencies management devices, but human resources staff doubted the usefulness of this information in their daily practices. They wanted a more concrete tool and system to manage competencies other than the job forms.

The assistant of the Human Resource Manager: «I am reading a job description and not competencies. However, our collaboration rests on the competencies. For the moment, it is ill-considered. Our concern is to develop a system of competencies management».

The Project Manager: «Competencies are a part of the job description».

The assistant of the Human Resource Manager: «We have worked on the jobs, tasks, activity, and little time on the competencies. Would you be satisfied with the job form if you were in my position? You always said that the competencies management is the backbone of the Human Resources. How do you consider the competencies management? What backbone do we define to do that?» (Working Meeting, May 12th 2009)15.

At the end of the August 2009, the pilot was composed by the following job forms: 9 job forms of the Investment Fund Department; 2 job forms of the Legal Department; and 4 job forms of the Agency.

14 «Le contenu de la fiche a émergé de lui-même. Ce sont les personnes qui ont défini les fiches. Nous avons collé à la description qu'on donné les collaborateurs des compétences de leur fonction» (The Consultant, Project Committee Banca, April 6th 2009).

15 The assistant of the Human Resources Manager: «Je vois descriptif de fonctions et non compétences. Hors notre collaboration repose sur les compétences. Pour l'instant c'est léger. Notre souci est d'élaborer un système de gestion des compétences».

The Project Manager: «Les compétences font parti du descriptif de fonction».

The assistant of the Human Resources Manager: «On a travaillé sur les fonctions, les tâches, les activités et peu sur les compétences. Serais-tu content de la description des fonctions à ma place? Tu disais toujours que la gestion des compétences est la colonne vertébrale des Ressources Humaines. Et toi, comment vois-tu la gestion des compétences? Quelle carcase on va donner à tous cela? » (Working Meeting, May 12th 2009).
From the job form to the Information System for Human Resources Management

At the same time of the definition of job form, actors dealt with the equipment issues. Because of the necessity to concretize this theoretical device into tools, shareholders dealt with the choice of information technologies. The choice and the development of tools had to embed the competencies management in the Banca practices.

“When we will know the device really well, we will have to take into consideration the computer support. The pilot job must have their own computer tool”. (The assistant of the Human Resources Manager, Steering Committee, February 19th 2009) 16

There are indeed many management tools and information technologies in the bank to manage human resources. According to the actors, a competencies management approach requires the integration of the competencies management devices into the various information technologies (website, intranet, balanced scorecard software, etc.) used in the bank. In order to define the relevant information technologies, a first meeting was organized March 11th 2009. From the beginning, human resources staff of the bank wanted to mobilize People Soft software. People Soft was already used by the bank. Also, the bank needed new specifications only. PeopleSoft is an ERP (Enterprise Resource Requirement) dedicated to human resources management. It seemed a relevant tool for the human resources staff of the Banca. Nevertheless, the model and the job from were not developed to fit with PeopleSoft logic.

The consultant17 : “the problem is that we have to know the incontrovertible rules in order to integrate our job form as the good as possible into PeopleSoft”. The Chief Information Officer of the Banca: “PeopleSoft has a precise terminology. Actually, this is only a vocabulary challenge. There are many words to say the same idea”. (Working Meeting, March 11th 2008).

16 « Une fois que le dispositif sera à peu près connu, il faut penser au support informatique. Il faut tout de suite penser à l’outil informatique. Il faut même que les métiers pilotes aient leur système d’informatique » (The assistant of Human Resources Manager, Steering Commitee, February 19th 2009).
From May 2009, the Banca had taken on a PeopleSoft consultant, in order to fit PeopleSoft with the content of the job form. Nevertheless, on July 23rd 2009, the responsible for training recognized some difficulties to integrate the logic of the model and the job form into PeopleSoft.

“I did the exercise with PeopleSoft from the last version of the job form. I realize that the technical competencies don’t match with the software logic. People have to describe rather the knowledge than the competencies. Job descriptions are not clear enough. There will be some problem to use that. To dissect the job form into PeopleSoft, we must make the work again with the people in order to match the competencies heading with the PeopleSoft logic” (Responsible for training at the Banca, Projet Commitee Banca, July 23rd 2009)\(^{18}\).

Actually, the consultant expressed his doubt about the relevance of PeopleSoft for this project. According to him, PeopleSoft is not adapted to this project.

“Names of headings are not adapted to PeopleSoft. The scoring measure is opaque, etc. Thus, we must not choose this software. PeopleSoft is too complex: configuration, development, and updates are complicated. We have said that a Web solution will be more adapted to this kind of project. It is useless to buy the competencies management module of PeopleSoft” (The consultant, Project Committee CSU, August 27\(^{th}\) 2009)\(^{19}\).

On October 5th 2009, the project was closed by the CSU and the Banca. The CSU handed over the job form of three services (Agency, Investment Fund Department, and Legal Department), and two documents allowing the deployment of the device to the bank. A mutual evaluation was organized in November 2009. The results were presented on December 7th 2009. The partners had a mixed result concerning the project.

\(^{18}\) « J'ai fait l'exercice avec PeopleSoft à partir des dernières versions des fiches de fonction. Je me rends compte que les compétences techniques ne reflètent pas du tout la logique du logiciel. Les personnes doivent davantage décrire les connaissances et non leurs compétences. Les descriptifs ne sont pas assez explicites. Il y aura des problèmes ensuite pour utiliser cela. Pour décortiquer la fiche dans PeopleSoft, on doit refaire le travail avec les personnes pour faire correspondre les intitulés des compétences dans la fiche et le contenu de PeopleSoft » (Responsible for training at the Banca, Projet Commitee Banca, July 23rd 2009).

\(^{19}\) « Les noms des rubriques ne sont pas adaptés à PeopleSoft. Le calcul du scoring des compétences est opaque, etc. Donc il ne faut pas s'engager là dedans. PeopleSoft est trop complexe: paramétrage, développement, mises à jour compliquées. Nous avons dit qu'une plateforme Web serait beaucoup mieux adaptée pour ce genre de projet. Il est inutile d'acheter le module gestion des compétences de PeopleSoft » (The Consultant, Project Committee CSU, August 27\(^{th}\) 2009).
“The synoptic form was very ambitious, but some people might be disappointed with the result. Actually, there was conceptualization work and training, and more particularly for the Human Resources department of BDL about the competencies management [...] In fact, the evaluation did not work very well, but we may not forget that the decisions were made together”²⁰ (The Project Manager, informal call phone, December 18th 2009).

In order to ensure the deployment of the tool, the Banca requested a functional requirement to the CSU, to implement an Information System for Human Resources Management. The Banca called into question its own Information System for Human Resources, and wanted more than just a tool to manage competencies, but an integrate Information System in order to manage all the human resources activities. The engineers of CSU had first done an assessment of the current solution. The CSU and the Banca organized two meetings, on November 13th 2009 and on November 26th at the Banca, and used a study previously done by a consulting firm. The assessment dealt with the five main currents of software use by the human resources staff. Then, the assessment identified the main human resources tasks and processes: competencies management, internal and external recruitment management, training management, administrative management, time and activities management, and reporting and statistics. This analysis highlighted firstly the existence of various software without any connection, leading to a duplication of data, and secondly the non user-friendliness of PeopleSoft regarding with the Banca expectations. From the two documents about the deployment of the device into the bank, the engineer of CSU prepared the functional requirements for a future Information System for Human Resources Management. The CSU handed the functional requirement to the Banca in February 2010. The competencies management became the central aspect of this future information system linking with the other human resources process. Engineers underlined that the future solution must be connected with software supporting the human resources process in order to collect and exchange information. However, the functional requirement did not determine specific tool, thus this second contract between the Banca and the CSU expired.

Process of compromise

²⁰ « La fiche synoptique du départ était ambitieuse, mais on peut être déçu par le résultat. Maintenant, il y a eu un travail de réflexion et un travail de formation, notamment du département RH à la gestion des compétences [...]. En fait, la session d'évaluation ne s'est pas très bien passée, mais il ne faut pas oublier que les décisions ont été prises en concertation » (The Project Manager, informal call phone, December 18th 2009).
This case study shows that a project weakly defined can lead to an unanticipated result. At the very beginning in September 2008, the first intention was to develop a tool for competencies management and deploy it into two services. In February 2010, the aim was to develop an Information System for Human Resources Management. Obviously, actors foresaw the development of a device and not only a tool, but they did not envisage a complete Information System integrating a lot of work process and software. Step by step, actors have structured their collective activity, and redefined their aim. Actually, modalities of coordination have emerged in practice. Compromises were produced and reproduced in practice. The development of the job form shows that modalities of coordination, previously defined in the partnership contract, were redefined in practices. Actually, Banca and CSU have never definitely sealed the modalities of partnership. Because the aim was redefined in action, there was no difference between achieved results and achieved compromises. From defining compromises, actors get results. The job form is a succession of negotiation from January 2009 through July 2009. When a satisfactory compromise was sealed, the job form was set. During the entire project, compromises were both reproduced and reinvented. Compromises have been fit together and reinterpreted in practice. Actually, I did not observe any rupture, but there was just an organizational process coming from the compromises. The following table summarizes the main steps, the main aspects, and the main compromises of the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main steps</th>
<th>Main challenges</th>
<th>Main propositions of actors</th>
<th>Main decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing representation about competencies model</td>
<td>Actors had to define the notion of competence and how to represent it</td>
<td>Articulation of collective competencies and individual competencies. Two main approaches: approach based job description, approach based competencies of actor description</td>
<td>In spite of many working meetings, a stabilized model was developed. Nevertheless, this step of reflection allowed to start the definition of the competencies management device and the elaboration of the job form</td>
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<tr>
<td>(October 2008 – June 2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Competencies management device</td>
<td>The aim is to define the main uses of the future device and the main users</td>
<td>Many potential uses appeared in discourses, but the mobility was the most important</td>
<td>The consultant lists all the potential uses. From this first list, the main aspects of the devices were developed</td>
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<tr>
<td>(January 2009 – April 2009)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Elaboration of job form</td>
<td>Competencies model and competencies management device appear quite abstract for the actors of the bank. Thus, the aim is to concretize these first</td>
<td>Job form is defined through many tests with collaborators and interactions between stakeholders of the project</td>
<td>At the end of the July 2009, actors were agree about the outline of a job form</td>
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<tr>
<td>(January 2009 – September 2010)</td>
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</table>
Table 2: process of compromises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>theoretical thoughts</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration of Information System for Human resources management (November 2009 – February 2010)</td>
<td>The job form is the main document. It allows collecting the competencies. Nevertheless, actors need tools and rules to stock, share, and manipulate these information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bank gave the CSU the choice to define the best solution. The bank requests a functional requirement from the CSU</td>
<td>The CSU hand a functional requirement for an Information System for Human Resources to the bank in November 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Discussion: structuring role of compromise in an organizational process

From the idea that compromise must be comprehended as both a process and a state, I have shown that this concept can be useful to understand collective activity. Also, I have focused on the structuring role of compromise. From this theoretical point, I can extend the structuring of compromise in organizational process through two theoretical lessons based on empirical evidence: first, compromise as equilibrium between concession and gift, and second, compromise as complete compromise or incomplete compromise.

Importance of the first compromise and the creation of meanings

As a state, I have argued that compromise is an abstract or physical *actant* for actors structuring the representation about the collective activity. Actors deal with the compromises sealed in order to coordinate themselves. Thus, compromises are successive markers for actors in their collective activities. Also, actors call for and mobilize the compromises to produce and reproduce the modalities of interactions. Compromises are memorial traces which are instantiated in practice. More precisely, compromise, as entity, can be comprehended as structural properties (Giddens, 1984). Also, compromise encloses structural properties enacting in practice. The representation of a compromise for one actor is double: a discursive representation returning to a previous practice, and an activation of these modalities in practice. Because of the irreversibility effect (Callon, 1986), first compromises are the most important to comprehend an organization process. The first compromise allows the sharing of a mutual approach about the process, as a project, a change management, an innovation, or the creation of an organization. The first compromise allows the sharing of a mutual representation. Because the stakeholders have different logics, the first compromise specifies the features of the project as well as everyone’s responsibilities. Through the first compromise, stakeholders determine their mutual vision of the project (Flichy,
2007). In the case study, in spite of the lack of modalities, the essential purpose was never called into question: building a competencies management device. It means that it is a satisfactory compromise for everybody.

**Compromise as equilibrium between concession and gift in time**

In practice, compromise is less and more than they wanted. This is a mutual gift and concession, and a synergy between stakeholders. Concession can be defined as “something which is allowed or given up, often in order to end a disagreement or the act of allowing or giving this” (Cambridge Dictionary). A concession is a renouncement in order to make the relationship between stakeholders easier. Conversely, a gift is something given by stakeholders for building the compromise. The notion of gift is near the works of Mauss (1954). From the notion of Kula, Mauss (1954) describes the relation between different tribes. The Kula is a permanent exchange of gifts. From reciprocity of exchanges, the tribes seal links. Also, compromise requires mutual effort in time to structure, maintain and enhance the collective activity. Stakeholders must repeat the dynamic of gifts and concessions in order to produce and reproduce the modalities of interactions. From the mutual gifts and concessions, a synergy between stakeholders can appear. From this synergy, new unexpected modalities of compromise emerge. This result of this synergy can be a mutual gain for everybody. In practice, the compromise encompasses all of these modalities (concessions, gifts, and synergy), which are negotiated and enacted by stakeholders.

To summarize, a compromise is both more and less than the stakeholders expected, and, for a part, another thing. An ideal typical compromise is, firstly, an equilibrium between gift and concession for each stakeholder, and, secondly, the synergy going past the concessions and gifts of actors in practice. I call this first ideal type of compromise complete comprise. A complete compromise is a satisfactory situation for all stakeholders. The value of partnership is fair sharing. Complete comprise is close to the concept of integration developed by Parker Follet (1924). According to the actors, the relations are collaborative and constructive. Actors are in a “synergy plus-plus theory, where a plus for you is also a plus for me” (Graham, 1998, p.1009). Nevertheless, collaborations and projects can pursue without complete comprises. I call this second ideal type of compromise incomplete compromise. In this case, stakeholders are in an unbalanced collaboration: the exchange between gift and concession are unsatisfactory for some.
Two typical cases can be underlined. First case: some actors consider that they concede too much. These actors are the losing party of the collaboration, and they are in a submissive relation with the others actors. Second case: some actors consider that they give too much. Actors give more than the other stakeholders: there is no reciprocity of gift. Whatever the case, there is no synergy between stakeholders. In either case, actors are in a dominant and/or submissive relation. An incomplete compromise can be interpreted by actors as abdication, concession, or surrender of principles. Modalities of compromise seem to be imposed by one or some stakeholders. From the point of view of some stakeholders, the gain of project is unfair sharing: “a plus for you means a minus for me” (Graham, 1998, p.1010). Nevertheless, a previously incomplete compromise can evolve to complete compromise in practice. In the case study, many incomplete compromises were allowed to define a complete compromise as the job form.

Materialization of compromises to objectivise the modalities

In the theoretical framework, I define the compromise as an abstract or physical mediator (Latour, 2005), which anchors the modalities. About this mediator, the case study underlines that stakeholders materialize their main compromises. The partnership contract, the report meeting, the job forms are mediators. Through this materialization, stakeholders determine the modalities of compromises and objectivise these ones. The materialization of compromises allows an objectivity of the modalities. The case study shows that the job form is defined through different versions. These versions allow actors to negotiate. These drafts empower and constrain actors in their negotiation. These are the territories to find a compromise about the competencies representation. From the materialization of negotiations to find compromise, actors can develop mediation objects (Hussenot and Missonier, 2010), which evolve in roles and nature through time. Also, materialization of compromise helps us to understand the entanglement between actors and objects in time. At last, materialization of compromise leads to get results about the project. That is to say, the compromise is a piece of the result of the collective activity. There is no difference between compromise to coordinate collective activity and compromise to get results. A compromise about an output is a compromise allowing the coordination. They are entangled.

Bibliography


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