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produces substantial effects and becomes viewed by management and workers as an integral part of an organization's power relations. We particularly illuminate how practices that mutually constitute belongingness and insubordination continuously reinforce collective resistance to make it the very texture of workers' lives. We therefore analyze everyday resistance as a way of life, through which workers aim to simultaneously contest managerial authority and protect their own social boundaries in a neoliberal context. Thereby, we offer a way to reconcile recognition and post-recognition politics in a dialogue envisaging the 'efficacy' of resistance in a new light.

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Resistance as a way of life: how a group of workers perpetuated insubordination to neoliberal management

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Abstract

This article sheds light on how a group of workers manage to create an enduring collective resistance, in an uncongenial context of neoliberal management pushing for compliant behaviors. Research on resistance has given scant attention to the concrete conditions through which collective resisting efforts can be sustained, despite adverse contexts. We highlight the process through which everyday collective resistance produces substantial effects and becomes viewed by management and workers as an integral part of an organization's power relations. We particularly illuminate how practices that mutually constitute *belongingness* and *insubordination* continuously reinforce collective resistance to make it the very texture of workers' lives. We therefore analyze everyday resistance as a *way of life*, through which workers aim to simultaneously contest managerial authority and protect their own social boundaries in a neoliberal context. Thereby, we offer a way to reconcile recognition and post-recognition politics in a dialogue envisaging the 'efficacy' of resistance in a new light.

Key Words: Collective resistance, everyday resistance, organizational politics, belongingness, insubordination, recognition politics, post-recognition politics.

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Introduction

> "*This site is… rough, socially speaking. Always has been. […] As soon as you arrive here, they go on strike or whatever. To 'show you.' I've never seen that elsewhere, ever. When I asked the director about it, he simply told me: 'welcome to Normandy' [laughs]. Because it really is the way things are going here.*" (Laurent, PCI manager)
>
> "*Here you can see it, it's… it's different from other sites. […] I had the feeling of living back in Zola's times, of entering another world. […]. You cannot ignore that fact. It's a determining factor in the way we approach our policies.*" (Denis, platform vice-director)
>
> "'*I like it here*'. *You come here and first thing you learn is that you can kick the shit out of management* [laughs]. *Well, I'm fine with that* [laughs]." (Kevin, PCI worker, fieldnotes)

These excerpts illuminate a peculiar conception of social relations in the factory that serves as the empirical terrain of this paper. They can be interpreted in two ways. At first glance, they suggest a form of fixed political antagonism setting the scene of a classical industrial relation in a big industrial factory (Burawoy, 1979; Collinson, 1992); second, they offer the expression of the permanence of a collective resistance that management would have to accept and accommodate: "*It really is the way things are going here.*" We suggest that these quotes prepare a relevant ground for the empirical examination of the conditions that permit resistance to *endure* to the point of being experienced as integral to the life at work of both managers and workers, in a factory where severe neoliberal managerial reforms are being implemented. This possibility is all the more important as fostering durable collective resistance in today's organizational neoliberal contexts is extremely difficult, even counter-intuitive: the deterioration of social relationships in the sense of forced fragmentation and destruction of workers' communities that are resulting from neoliberal measures (Courpasson, Younès & Reed, 2021) could indeed reduce resistance to subjective and politically innocuous forms of protest (Contu, 2008; Fleming, 2016). We contend that this is not necessarily the case, and strive to analyze the conditions that permit collective resistance to endure and establish itself as an integral part of the life of a group of workers and, by the same token, to be politically significant.

The issue of the very duration of resistance processes over time has been the object of scant attention in organizational research. Put differently, we do not know much about how processes of resistance are maintained and sustained in the long run. Enduring resistance is sometimes implicitly associated with organizational infrastructures that permit resistance to last because of the sustenance of resisters' commitment. However, social movement research has also

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documented that retaining commitment among activists is sometimes a daunting task (Klandermans, 1997; Taylor, 1989) and resisters often simply give up (Rahmouni Elidrissi & Courpasson, 2019). We argue that this lack of attention to the issue of enduring resistance partially derives from the subjectivisation of resistance in recent organizational research. That is, the focus is most often on the individualistic treatment of petty acts and sentiments that are, by definition, not supposed to endure (Fleming & Spicer, 2003; Mumby, Thomas, Marti & Seidl, 2017). From this perspective, few studies engage directly with long-lasting organizational resistance. Instead, the research stresses individual reactions to the deleterious effects of managerial domination. In a similar vein, infra-political perspectives on resistance (Scott, 1990) have been extremely influential in shaping a dominant view of resistance based on covert acts, without analyzing the conditions that may guarantee their *continuity* over time (Collinson, 1992; Mumby et al., 2017; Scott, 1990). Endurance as an important condition for effective resistance is therefore absent from organizational research - or at best, *implicit*. Researchers study *episodes* of resistance as steps in a process that is not analyzed as enduring (Courpasson, Dany & Clegg, 2012). The conditions and mechanisms that allow workplace resistance to endure – and therefore generate substantial effects and recognition (Courpasson, 2016) - are considered as backward-looking, because resistance should now be studied according to "*a more expansive conception of the typical sphere of struggle*" (Mumby, 2020, p. 1).

We engage in these debates through an empirical study examining how a group of resisters manage to maintain and reproduce collective insubordination to neoliberal management in a chemical factory. In particular, we analyse the endurance of this resistance through two major practices: *belongingness* and *collective insubordination*. We highlight how belongingness and collective insubordination are mutually constituted and have generated an enduring resistance that is experienced by workers as a *way of life* (Theodossopoulos, 2014): by this we mean that workers' life, both at home and at work, is based on the enduring belongingness to an insubordinate group of people. We show that insubordination is systematically developed to reinforce belongingness, and *vice versa*. In this paper, we therefore conceive enduring resistance as the product of social relations that are concomitantly embedded within the shop floor and outside of the factory walls. These social relations are the locus of active everyday social struggles, which substantially characterize the collective life of workers/resisters. This paper thus addresses Anthony's (1989, p. 7) argument that "*the so-called subcultures (…) found*

within some organizations are stronger and more enduring than the transitory managerial cultural espousals that would overcome them".

Our contributions to research on resistance are twofold. First, we illuminate the conditions that permit collective resistance to endure in a context of ruthless fragmentation. We highlight the combined effects of belongingness and insubordination, permitting workers to resist attempts of neoliberal management to appropriate and harness their identities and lives (Fleming, 2017; Land & Taylor, 2011). Against all odds, we show a collective resistance that effectively counters the all-encompassing forms of corporate domination highlighted by managerial practices of individualization. By the same token, we highlight that the workplace remains a central location of significant forms of collective resistance. Our second contribution to research on resistance is introducing the notion of *resistance as a way of life* to account for the organizational inscription of resistance in the long run, despite antagonistic contextual constraints. We show some conditions for the resistance to be experienced by workers as the central ethos of their common life. Analyzing collective resistance as a way of life does not diminish its oppositional nature but helps to better illustrate the conditions needed for resistance to be perpetuated. This in turn sheds new light on how recognition and post-recognition politics may be combined, despite their usual opposition (Courpasson, 2016; Fleming, 2016; Mumby et al., 2017). In other words, we depict the endurance of resistance as both the achievement of explicit recognition at the factory *and* as a potential source of emancipation "*for its own sake*" (Fleming, 2016, p. 108) that protects a certain way of life at work. Theorizing resistance as way of life illustrates a novel way to account for resistance impacts.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section lays out the theoretical underpinnings of the study by developing our argument related to the endurance of collective resistance. We then discuss our method before introducing our empirical findings. Finally, we draw out the core contributions of the article in the discussion and conclusion.

The uncertain impact of resistance

Organizational research has mostly viewed resistance as both individual and mundane (Fleming & Spicer, 2003) - and, when collective, often unsuccessful (Marti & Fernandez 2013). Resistance is also frequently regarded as an infra-political process, meaning covert and difficult to recognize (Scott, 1990). The few studies on collective resistance have examined a variety of acts ranging from undercover organized secret activities (Courpasson & Younès, 2018) to unofficial efforts (Marti & Fernandez, 2013) to overt insurrections (i.e. publicly declared

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actions that aim to directly challenge social relations) (Mumby et al., 2017), and more radical efforts such as collectively organized hunger strikes (Courpasson, 2017; O'Hearn, 2009). Despite the different angles of investigation and theorization, what is relatively common to most research is that it theorizes resistance's impact in terms of an opposition between *recognition* and *post-recognition* politics (Courpasson, 2016; Fleming, 2016). That is, the resisters' objective would be either to have their voice heard and recognized, or to be "left alone" to seek spaces of emancipation beyond the factory walls (Mumby, 2020). At the same time, research pays scant attention to the question of whether and under what conditions resistance endures over time. This is a shame, we argue, because understanding such endurance can better illustrate the concrete effects of resistance, thereby avoiding the trap of the recognition/post-recognition binarism. Indeed, previous research often seems to imply that collective resistance at best permits the temporary suspension of rules in a given system of power - for instance, when the oppressive regime of military combat was temporarily suspended during the improvised truces during World War I (Wiedeman, Pina e Cunha & Clegg, 2021), or when the long hunger strikes of several resisters led to negotiations with management (Courpasson, 2017) before the usual status is restored. Stated simply, research has not investigated how collective resistance can become a permanent process, especially in a context hostile to collective resisting initiatives like neoliberal management (Courpasson et al., 2021).

We believe this lack of attention is partly due to the way scholars engage in the political efficiency debate. A prevailing perspective argues that organizational resistance generally has no substantial political effect, simply because individuals willingly subject themselves to systems of domination (Willmott, 1993), or even contribute to their own subordination to avoid confrontation (Allen, 2008; Gaventa, 1980). Some types of workplace opposition might therefore even strengthen social subordination (Burawoy, 1979; Collinson, 1988; Fleming, 2013). In neoliberal contexts, routines of non-challenge would develop, making politically effective resistance indeed an unlikely event (Courpasson & Marti, 2019). At the very least, resistance would often be confined to unobtrusive objections (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). Many silent and subjective forms of resistance have indeed developed (Fleming & Sewell, 2002; Fleming & Spicer, 2003). However, those forms are usually described as a-political (Contu, 2008), and unlikely to disturb power systems (Fleming, 2016). The subjectivisation of resistance, its "existential" nature (O'Doherty & Willmott, 2001), and the current focus on resisters as "subjects of modernity" (Thompson & Ackroyd, 1995, p. 627) have obfuscated certain concrete conditions without which resistance cannot endure, and therefore be politically

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impactful. In particular, *post-recognition* views of politics defend the idea that a new kind of resistance among 21st century workers would be defined by the "*struggle to be left alone*" (Harney, 2011, quoted in Fleming, 2013, p. 490), characterized by disappearing from the political scene and avoiding dialogue with power holders while searching for a self-determination outside the corporate realm. The slogan of this kind of politics is the democratic reclamation of work, whereby "*working time will cease to be the dominant social time*" (Gorz, 2005, p. 73). Struggles should thus be studied now in the context of organizing beyond organization (Mumby 2020). Between political harmlessness and mere departure from the political game, research on resistance might have therefore turned its back on forms of opposition that willfully play the game of politics, even at the price of radicalisation (Courpasson, 2017). Consequently, situations where collective resistance is likely to alter organizational power relations are hardly recognized (Wiedeman et al., 2021), because that would suppose either to romanticize stories of bravery (Mumby et al., 2017) or endlessly invoke an illusion of autonomy (Contu, 2008; Thompson, 2016). Situations where collective resistance can directly challenge power relations and install resistance as a permanent defiance to established powers are even harder to contemplate.

Argument

This latter possibility supposes to go beyond what infra-political views and research on the production of "*subtle constructions of resistant meanings*" (Courpasson & Marti, 2019, p. 6) are likely to accomplish. The infra-political perspective is crucial to capture the capacities that certain groups of people mobilize to silently articulate their claims and generate confrontational moments that can bring about political alternatives (Scott, 1990; Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013). However, it does not consider the conditions through which a group of workers can develop a politically purposive project of insubordination to management that is *designed to endure*, despite uncongenial organizational contexts of neoliberal transformation. We suggest that under certain conditions, everyday acts of insubordination can shape a practice of resistance that is consubstantial to the way of life that resisters want to protect. We propose to analyze resistance as a life-embedded practice that is assumed "*to become part and parcel of common thinking*" (Krzyzanowski, 2020, p. 435) in a given organizational context.

This view of enduring resistance does not portray a mere fantasy of autonomy (Contu, 2008) – much less a romantic story of political heroism (Mumby, 2017) - because it is rooted in concrete gestures and accomplishments enacted every day *in situ*, and often in the very presence of the adversary. This resistance is established on the systematic capture of occasions where resisters

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overtly display their power, thereby constantly confirming their strength so that management must recognize it. More importantly, we contend that this resistance is permitted by the intricate relations existing in the group of resisters between their life at work and at home.

We further argue that approaching resistance as a way of life turns the issue of political efficiency upside down: from the widespread notion of the obvious subjugation of people to domination, to a permanent practice of insubordination. In our study, the resistance is enduring because certain activities, whilst deviant according to prevalent neoliberal principles and demands, are coherent and meaningful within a specific work culture. Through this lens, we study resistance as socially organized through practices of insubordination that perpetuate enclaves of competing systems of meaning and relations that, while constantly in opposition, permit the effects of resistance to accumulate *within* the very managerial structures of power. We eventually propose that the most complete achievement of resistance occurs when it becomes a *way of life*, inscribing struggle in the daily life as a customary and habitual collective and individual activity.

Here, we particularly examine two mutually reinforcing practices that underlie the endurance of resistance. First, *Belongingness,* whereby special social modalities become embedded in structures and processes and, consequently, somehow routinized. In this paper, we approach belongingness as a sense of being in a social location, as a personal feeling of emotional attachment and as a discursive construction of socio-spatial boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (Antonsich, 2010); Yuval-Davis highlights these dimensions by defining belongingness as being about "*feeling at home"* (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 19). Second, *Collective insubordination,* whereby self-serving ideas and actions develop to valorize insubordination in the eyes of workers, in turn inducing a view of resistance that management is constrained to include in the factory politics.

Methods

The paper draws on a longitudinal ethnography conducted between 2011 and 2019 at a petrochemical factory in Normandy (France). We build particularly on our specific position in the field - as an "ethnographer at home"[1] (Ouattara, 2004) - to thoroughly analyze the social repercussions, among shift workers, of the plant restructuring initiated by a merger in 2014.

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[1] The first author originates from the working-class community studied and is personally acquainted with several of the shift-worker participants, as either a relative or childhood friend.

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We draw on the first author's familiarity with the field and his personal acquaintances with shift-worker participants to expand the investigation from work environments into more intimate settings, observing respondents' home spheres and participating in private activities. This investigation illustrated the material, cultural and geographical requirements of the endurance of collective resistance in the neoliberal workplace. We also focus on shift workers because their work collectives, previously spared from divisive managerial policies, were disproportionally affected by the merger.

Context

The factory investigated is part of one of the biggest French industrial companies, called "EnergyCorp" in this paper. In 2014, as part of its strategic reorientation, the firm decided to launch the *Convergence²* project, merging the factory with another plant located nearby and, in the process, creating the biggest integrated petrochemical platform in Europe. The internal restructuring following the merger disrupted established patterns of work organization and employment relations in an industrial complex known as a national working-class bastion, with historically strong trade unions and collective protests against management.

This strategic reorientation resulted in the individualization of wages and career paths, as well as the diffusion of a new organizational culture that encouraged self-entrepreneurship. Specifically, new forms of appraisal were introduced to increase transparency of shift workers' activities by assessing their skills, performance and commitment at work, thereby weakening collectives. Such individual assessment was then used by management to justify unequal wages and career opportunities. The management builds on these changes to alter the behavior of shift workers specifically, traditionally regarded as "troublemakers" in the factory. To better grasp the importance of shift workers' intricate solidarities and the resulting forms of resistance they continue to express, it is crucial to consider these organizational changes.

Indeed, the longitudinal ethnography conducted among shift workers between 2014–2019 in *and* outside the factory highlights the systems of solidarity that these workers have maintained over time, as well as collective mobilizations as evidenced by several strikes and protests observed during the time of the investigation.

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² All italicized words are drawn from empirical material gathered in the field.

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<u>A "familiar" field</u>

The first author conducted a longitudinal field study in the industrial working-class background from where he originates, among childhood friends and relatives.

In this study, both proximity with informants and a careful examination of the fieldworker's subjective appreciations enabled attention to data that otherwise would have been missed. Closeness with respondents has provided a unique position of observation and understanding, allowing us to pursue the investigation beyond the boundaries of the organization. This familiarity with informants led us to broaden the perimeter of the analysis to share various activities with participants in more intimate settings, thus capturing aspects of domestic life that illustrate the interconnection between private and work-related practices.

This "dual role" (Essers, 2009) of the fieldworker – i.e., being simultaneously a friend and a researcher – thus permitted the continuity of the investigation in various times and spaces. This in turn allowed attention to how the enduring resistance may be understood as a way of life, at the crossroad of diverse socio-spatial locations, involving both professional and private aspects of shift-workers' interconnected lives. Also, reflecting upon our particular position in the field led us to explore respondents' appropriation of specific places (such as control rooms or the refectory at work) that a stranger would have been unable to access. This atypical intertwining of intimacy and investigation then gradually refined our focus on the professional, social and spatial entanglements that produce workers' practices of belongingness, subsequently sustaining subversive acts against the new managerial imperatives.

<u>Data collection and analysis</u>

Site access and implications

In the context studied, "shifts" are the product of an organization adapted to the modern productive constraints, as the factory runs 24 hours seven days a week. The group of shift workers alternates day and night work periods, with non-standard working-hours. Being classified "*SEVESO 2*" - the highest security protocol in France - entrance within the factory is strictly controlled and the management does not allow any "*visitor*" outside business reasons and business hours (8h-18h). Therefore, to access the factory and observe shift-workers, we needed to enter the field through unofficial means and at unconventional times.

Most observations and interviews with workers were thus made outside business hours, within the "*Plan Centrale Incendie*" [or "PCI"] unit, in the shadow of the managerial gaze. This unit

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is geographically the plant's most peripheral one, close to an entrance and far from the Comex [main management] buildings, allowing us to more easily enter and exit the complex. The PCI unit has 37 employees as of this writing, all men. Like other shift-workers in the factory, they work in three eight-hour shift cycles (i.e., 6am-2pm, 2pm-10pm and 10pm-6am). Divided into teams of five, the unit is always present on site.

We were able to enter the factory thanks to friends and relatives who work at the site and count among our interviewees. Taking advantage of these close acquaintances, we accessed the site with their complicity - for instance, entering the plant after nightfall, once management had left.

> I arrive at 1:30 pm: I go to the reception desk, I give my ID for the access badge. The guardian jokingly says: "What's up with the repeated visits here? Well, it's OK because it's you." [Later same day:] I arrive again at 10.15 pm: I don't go to the security desk and sneak in directly. I call Romain, the operator, who comes to open the door for me. It's night already, the whole management is gone. Shift-workers own the place. (fieldnotes)

We thus managed to gain night and week-end access to a high-security factory to pursue ethnographic observations and further develop relationships with other informants, allowing us to investigate during understudied times (Menoux, 2017). Over time, however, our presence became known to management, who eventually agreed to be interviewed after shift workers informally introduced us. Gradually, we managed to obtain more official access to the factory and perform daytime interviews while continuing to observe outside business hours. Ultimately, we benefited from full access to the factory, which is unusual in high-security plants in France.

Although we never intentionally hid our investigation, this circumvention of official access channels was mostly due to difficulties in obtaining the informed consent of the management without attracting attention and suspicion (Roulet, Gill, M., Stenger & Gill D., 2017), thus (partly) losing access to the site. Also, investigating in the absence of the management was key to understanding how shift-workers' social dynamics lead to enduring resisting patterns. Scholars have highlighted the grey shades of interviewees' "consent" in qualitative studies, especially in ethnography (Roulet et al., 2017; Simons & Usher, 2000), where for practical reasons full transparency by researchers is complicated and even potentially damaging to the study and informants (Beaud & Weber, 2017). Rather than apply universal principles of ethics, we thus consider the need of an "ethics of situation" (Calvey, 2008; Simons & Usher, 2000), allowing a more "*flexible and responsive form of ethical research*" (Ravn, Barnwell & Barbosa Neves, 2020, p. 40). We took high care not to divulge any information that could compromise the anonymity and integrity of our respondents. To that end, translation from French to English helped to create distance while blurring identification processes. Also, since our data result from

a longitudinal investigation which draws mostly on informal conversations, observation of practices and anecdotal (but significant) events, they do not reveal sensitive information that could be prejudicial to their authors. This situated ethics, shaped by and for the singular context of the field, thus considers the singularities of our fieldwork, acknowledging the ethnographer's need for partial disguise in order to access sensible data (e.g., how workers could avoid the managerial gaze while maintaining a high sense of belongingness and subversive sociabilities, thus ultimately producing an enduring resistance).

Data collection

We conducted 18 rounds of data collection between January 2014 and February 2019. These included in-depth interviews with both workers and their managers, non-participant observations, and field documents. We built a relationship of trust with the respondents, while maintaining a critical distance. In particular, we took advantage of living in another city to preserve reflexive distance, thereby developing a staggered approach incorporating time-outs and multiple focused revisits to the field (Ybema & Kamsteeg, 2009). This self-reflexive method fostered a certain detachment, thereby allowing a more objective analysis of subjective notes.

The resulting data consist of 79 interviews with a broad panel of workers; 18 months of full-time observations (both on-site and outside); and numerous archived documents collected over the years including official communications, informal information (e.g., email or minutes of meetings), individual performance reviews of our interviewees, appraisal guides, and process descriptions). The interviews were conducted in French and lasted, on average, slightly over an hour and half. They cover the entire investigation period and increased in emphasis and depth because of the cumulative nature of the fieldwork process. All interviews, tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis, were semi-directive, aiming to gradually refine the focus while concomitantly allowing the interviewees to speak in their own voice. We questioned workers about their experiences, feelings and opinions regarding the post-merger configurations and - more specifically - their relationships with colleagues, management and other employees. Other participants than PCI shift-workers (i.e., retired shift-workers, daily employees and external workers) and shift-workers from other units were also interviewed to compare perspectives Similarly, to advance the understanding of workers' reactions, we also interviewed middle-managers and COMEX members.

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Observations were key to highlight how workers could maintain collective resisting patterns in the hostile neoliberal context following EnergyCorp restructuring. This revealed forms of solidarity and mutual support in *and* outside the workplace. As previously mentioned, numerous observations were pursued beyond work situations as we continued to visit some participants at home. These excursions offered a different perspective while illustrating events that would have otherwise gone unnoticed, such as the home-work continuity of their solidaristic ties. We thus observed personal life and practices outside business hours, participating in the socializing activities (e.g., parties, dinners, football games, barbecues, etc.) that contribute to perpetuating close bonds among workers. This helped us to better understand the importance of material, cultural and geographical conditions in the shaping of an enduring collective resistance in a neoliberal workplace.

Data analysis

By closely examining participants' experience regarding changes at work, we were able to narrow down significant factors sustaining shift-workers' collective resistance. We understand the persistence of collective resistance in the factory as a result of two mutually self-fostering practices - *belongingness* and *collective insubordination* - which enable the development and consolidation of an enduring resistance among shift-workers.

First, we looked at the signs of resistance to neoliberal fragmentizing principles. We established a broad list, composed of elements including (but not limited to): covering for absent coworkers; financial, material and emotional support at home or elsewhere outside of the workplace; violent reactions (regarding obedience) to authority; games and jokes in the plant; mockery of the administration and managers; and physical and symbolic appropriation of specific workplaces such as the control room or the refectory. Then, we noticed that all elements pertained to either practices of *belongingness* (e.g., feelings of uniqueness and superiority regarding other categories of workers; friendships; and mutual support and solidarities at work and at home) or practices of *insubordination* (e.g., subversion of managerial devices at work; pride in displaying rebellious behaviors; exclusion of the hierarchy from certain workspaces; and overt conflicts with management).

We thus structured these two major processes as follow (see figure 1. below): *Practices of belongingness* refer to two specific social modalities shared by shift-workers: (1) an exclusive working-class subculture based on the nature of work and social separation from other workers (what they call a "*shift-spirit*"); and (2) friendships and solidaristic ties fostered by social and

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geographical proximity (their so-called "*family spirit*"). *Practices of collective insubordination* also entail two modalities: (1) appropriation of specific workplaces where shift-workers can affirm their *territorial exclusiveness* and foster subversive aspirations; and (2) concrete acts of *overt subversion* of neo-managerial norms of conduct (such as taking long meal breaks or displaying normative public insubordination against management).

Insert Figure 1 about here

As illustrated in figure 1, *practices of both belongingness* and *collective insubordination* are mutually constituted: belongingness is sustained by accumulating acts of insubordination, while insubordination rests upon a strong and longstanding sense of belongingness. Their constant interrelation over time generates a resistance that seems to be incorporated as both a way of life by workers and a regular feature of organizational politics.

Findings

Practices of belongingness

In this section, we unpack how the shaping of an enduring resistance entails the continuous production of practices of belongingness, based on a common (and exclusive) experience of work, private space and social activities.

A masculine working-class "shift-spirit": occupational cohesiveness and feeling of uniqueness

Shift-spirit refers to a working-class group that has structured itself over time in opposition to other social groups. The factory is indeed marked by the existence of a strong social cleavage between shift-workers and white-collar workers and those in employee positions. All the factory staff is aware of this social split: "*What is important to understand is that shifts are a working-class world*" (Jean, former PCI manager). The distinctive nature of their risky, technical masculine work gives them a feeling of uniqueness and superiority fueling strong solidaristic ties between them.

First, the bulk of shift-work in the factory resides in team-based activities that are difficult to split among individuals. This is particularly salient in the PCI unit, where the collective nature of work - coupled with complex interventions – helps to maintain robust bonds among workers. Christophe tells me that he likes shiftwork because he benefits from a unique configuration, linked to the nature of activities:

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"Unlike other jobs in which you are in your bubble when you work, you think individually (...) Here, the work is collective. It is a matter of doing everything together. This produces a 'shift spirit.' That's how the shifts work, you have to rely on others."

The very nature and requirements of the job induce *de facto* a certain cohesiveness among workers because of the shared characteristics of the activities, which cannot be carried out alone. Importantly however, their work consists mainly of prevention and monitoring activity: their technical knowledge of the machines allows the plant to "run smoothly." All participants thus refer to their work as a "*waiting job*." Workers paradoxically find a source of pride in doing as little as possible at work, because their nonchalance shows that they are in full control of their work:

> [2.30 am] I stay in the refectory with the guys, eating pizza. Kevin, a young new temporary worker, suddenly yawns and says he's exhausted. Everybody is telling him to go to sleep in a back room. He answers that he is not comfortable with the idea of sleeping at work. Pascal then looks him in the eyes, leans over the table and tells him firmly: "*If you don't sleep in your shift, it means that you're not at ease with your job yet.*" (fieldnotes)

However, although the "waiting" nature of their job allows some free time, problems requiring an intervention do happen. In that case, teamwork is key to protecting themselves and solving the issues. Workers' cohesiveness is thus also mediated by a feeling of physical threat inherent in the dangerous chemical products being processed in the factory. Indeed, all shift-workers like to repeat: "*We don't make no chocolate here.*" If the plant is mostly running smoothly, sometimes a whole unit can suddenly be "*gone to shit.*" This naturally fosters a strong unity between shift-workers, fueled by the collective and risky nature of their work experiences: "*You are forced to rely on others anyway, because sometimes you risk your neck*" (Christophe). Collective social ties are thus woven by the mere need to "*stay together,*" especially after accidents that regularly kill or badly injure individuals:

> Improvised boat trip in the afternoon just after the morning shift, during which the F2 tank exploded (two subcontractors died and one was critically wounded). All the crew is here. We go fishing around Honfleur, where we binge drink in the evening, before coming back drunk in the middle of the night. (fieldnotes)

The occupational cohesiveness developed in this work context is rooted in workers' mutual dependency, interactions and shared experiences, through which they recognize their common situation and need for reciprocal support. The resulting "*shift spirit,*" rooted in the collective, technical and risky working-class nature of the work, fuels a strong feeling of uniqueness and superiority over other categories of workers - that is, non-shift workers, who do not share their work or social characteristics.

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The influence of the "*shift culture*" is indeed particularly salient through the very semantics used by shift workers to distinguish themselves from non-shift workers. Shift workers systematically and contemptuously refer to other occupational groups – mostly composed of administrative employees - as "*day folks*." Data indeed highlight how feelings of uniqueness and patterns of solidarity emerge from the specificities of shift-work (i.e., an atypical time rhythm). The schedule is the same on weekends and bank holidays. They are assigned to work for five consecutive days, followed by three days off. Thereby they constantly interact, including when managers are not present in the factory.

Outside business hours, management is represented by only one person, the Permanent Shift Foreman ("*CMQP*"). This individual oversees all the shift supervisors in the plant[3]. Although they are the official management representatives during nights and week-ends, CMQPs are all former shift supervisors who did their entire career as shift-workers: thus, they tend to turn a blind eye when shift-workers violate corporate rules. Besides, they feel closer with shift-workers than with other managers:

> "I converse with Gérard [CMQP]. He is proud to tell me that when he was younger, he was a '*fucking wanker*' who '*said shit*' to his hierarchy. I learn that he comes from a working-class background. He confesses that he has never felt like he *'belongs to the world of managers, their ways of seeing and speaking,'* and their particular behaviors. He insisted: '*I've never had a party with managers here, they're not from the same world.'*" (fieldnotes)

When the speaker above retired several months after that interaction, Gerard interestingly invited only shift-workers to his retirement party and none of his own colleagues. Shift cycles constitute a way of life for shift workers, as the experience of working shifts gives them considerable freedom compared with other workers in the factory. This confers a special atmosphere whose inhabitants feel cut off from other employees. This is exemplified by the excerpts below from author's discussion with Clement in the refectory. Clement likes the vibes of the shifts and describes how the autonomy resulting from the absence of management is particular to shift work:

> "*We live in a small family context here* […] *We are cut off from the hierarchy world.* […] *(There is) no such thing for other employees. When you work during the day, this hierarchy is present. Heavily.*"

The resulting demarcation contributes to delineating the social boundaries of their group. As a result, shift-workers and day folks form "*two different worlds*" which don't understand each other:

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[3] There are a total of five of them, who, unlike the other foremen, also work in turn in shift.

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> *"The most important differences among the factory staff lay not between production units or sectors, but between a shift-worker and a day-worker."* (Didier, unit manager)

Tacit and informal arrangements are generally made between teams of shift-workers: the teams working during business hours do most of the tasks to give the current night and week-end teams a margin of freedom. Indeed, while day workers emphasize the lack of back up enjoyed by shift workers (if their tasks aren't completed at the end of the day, they must catch up the next day as there is no one to pick up the slack), shift workers, by contrast, can count on the other teams to finish any incomplete work and cover them if needed. Among the benefits of such down time is the ability to forge strong collective bonds, as illustrated by Florent, who has worked as both a shift worker and a daily employee. At the time of the interview, he had just returned to shift after a year of working office hours. He was initially expected to do two, but returned to shift a year earlier by his own request:

> *"Moving on to a day job… it's a lot less fun to work. I had crazy hours.* [..] *you're monitored everywhere. You're constantly under pressure."* Plus, he didn't really make friends with day folks during this time: *"I didn't see any of them* [his office-colleagues] *outside. I couldn't stand the day job any longer."* (fieldnotes)

Shift work affords workers considerably more freedom, which besides providing a pleasant work atmosphere, also strengthens their feeling of uniqueness:

> *"Right now* [the interview is conducted at night], *who knows, the guys in PEL* [another unit] *are doing the conga, no one knows, no one cares. You can't do that by day."* (Florent)

Coupled with their autonomy at work, this particularity gives shift-workers a strong sense of superiority over other employees.

> *"I know a lot of people here, shift-workers, but I know no day folks. I don't know what they do. But they must be bored shitless compared to us* [laughs]." (Jimmy)

Shift-workers' activities are also highly specialized; they are practically the only staff with the technical knowledge to operate the plant's delicate machinery. Their job therefore requires a high level of expertise, in which they take great pride. Their atypical work schedule coupled with their technical skill fuels their feeling of entitlement and contempt towards "day folks." The resulting feeling of superiority leads them to denigrate the work of other employees, who do not share such dexterity. For instance, the following excerpts from Dimitri reflect the pride he takes in his work and the condescension that shift-workers feel towards other staff:

> "*They are no technicians. Conversations stay a bit low. I prefer to talk with shift-workers, who know stuff."*

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This "shift-spirit" is both an enabler and a consequence of more private practices of belongingness and solidarities that workers weave across distinct places, in-between work and home.

Family spirit: solidarities at the crossroads of work and home

Workers' enduring resistance is further strengthened by practices of everyday sociability in the domestic sphere. The "shift-spirit" described above is thus connected with the bonding practices created outside of work in more private settings. Shift-workers are embedded in networks of friendships, neighborliness, and mutual aid outside of work, which act as significant resources for their intra-organizational resistance.

First, the gap between shift work and the usual social rhythms tends to socially isolate them from most employees. In interviews, all shift workers shared the needed adaptation of their homes and rhythms of life, especially to fit with shift-works requirements, thereby creating a form of home-work continuity. In describing the shift-work experience, Mickey says:

> "*When you work in shifts, the whole family does the shifts* (referring to the constraining domestic arrangements required by such atypical work schedules. He recalls his son bringing a friend home in the middle of the day while he was sleeping): *The kid feels like I'm asleep all the time* [laughs]".

From seeking arrangements with neighbors to strategically scheduling naps and non-day shifts during holidays, their entire social life is impacted by the dictate of shift-work, whose particular rhythms pervade private and intimate spaces. The social ties they form outside work are thus facilitated by their atypical work schedules that set them apart from most of the employees who work office hours.

In addition, shift-workers live near one another as illustrated in the following field notes (which also shed further light on the solidarity bonds that form outside of work):

> Before Patrick moved into my parents' building, he lived near Vincent's place. When Vincent separated from his wife in 2015, Patrick shared his flat with him. Vincent slept on Patrick's couch for five months.

> September 2017: Gaetan moved to another house, close to where Jimmy lives. However, Gaetan's old house was sold three weeks before he was able to move into the new one. Jimmy welcomed Gaetan, his wife and 2 children into his home during that interval.

This geographical proximity also explains why some colleagues were already friends *before* entering the job: "*I have many colleagues who've become buddies, and sometimes we were already friends before starting to work here*" (Vincent).

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Socialization during atypical work hours and nearby places of residence are thus key to understanding the interconnection between work and home in shaping a collective, which is often interpreted as a "*second family.*" This is exemplified by excerpts from a conversation in the refectory with Gaetan. He insists, because of his atypical work schedule:

> "*You spend more time with your shift than you do with your own family. Your colleagues, they're becoming pals. It's like a little family here.*"

Therefore, the weaving of social ties allows workers to preserve work collectives and strengthen solidarities. Belongingness is largely produced beyond the factory walls*,* in a home-work continuity whereby work is constantly 'muddled together' with outside life.

Indeed, shift-work teams meet outside regularly, whether at home or in public places to have a drink or meal, set up barbecues or parties at someone's home, play football, or go fishing. One important type of outside social activity consists of home renovation projects, which most shift workers have helped the others with at some point. These private events regularly involve former PCI members (moved to another plant unit), including retired workers who still "*hang out with the guys.*" Similarly, former PCI members continue to drop by the factory, "*coming over for coffee*" to chill with the team during night and week-end shifts as illustrated by the following field note:

> Jeannot comes by the house for lunch. As he retired two years ago, I jokingly ask him if he doesn't miss the factory too much. Yet he looks at me and answers in an unexpectedly serious and nostalgic tone: "*I miss the buddies* [silence]. *Actually, it's the buddies that I miss.*" He then tells me that he plans to pass by the PCI soon. Although he is no longer working, I note that he still visits the PCI for coffee quite regularly. I already saw him chilling two or three times in the refectory in the last 4 months.

Contrary to individually aimed managerial measures, shift-workers protect a daily system of social and practical solidarity, both inside and outside the workplace and involving their families. Professional and friendship ties are intrinsically linked: participants talk about a certain "*family spirit*" that would prevail both at work and outside the factory walls:

> I converse with Romain. He tells me that he shouldn't have been working today, but at the last minute he replaced Vincent, who called and told him his car broke down. When I ask if it bothered him, Romain corrects me immediately: "*We can't think like that.*" He knows the guys would have done the same thing for him, so his gesture is "*natural.*" Whether it is to "*stand up for the service*" [PCI], to "*replace someone out of the blue,*" or to "*help out by tinkering at a guy's home,*" they all support each other. That's the "*spirit.*" (fieldnotes)

For example, money from the illegal sale of building and car materials (usually stolen from the site and resold to individuals outside of work) is poured into a common pot and saved to pay for a dinner in a restaurant for the whole team. These "fundraising" events, at the intersection

between work and private life, are common. Personal difficulties are generally shared and resolved collectively when possible. Several examples include severe debt and alcoholism among some workers, as illustrated by the following field note:

> Although I'm not as close to him as with some other respondents, Ruben is a great friend of my father whom I've known since my childhood. We had an open-hearted conversation today, during which I learned that he was trapped in debt two years ago. He is now back on his feet and infinitely grateful to the guys [PCI], who have supported and helped him during this period. They helped him "*with this*" (by giving him money) but also with "*other things*" – namely, his drinking problem, as he regularly came to work completely "*wasted*" at that time and the guys had to cover him.

In some cases, shift-workers truly act as family, especially for colleagues who have few or no relatives:

> Francis killed himself only one month after his retirement (the company set up "pre-retirement" plans for senior shift-workers between the ages of 57 and 60 years old, depending when they started working). He said, multiple times before he left, that he didn't wanted to retire, as he could laugh and have fun at work. Depressed, he made no funeral plans, leaving his fragile housewife, Jeanne, with nothing. Loic, Patrick, Ruben and Jeannot helped her and took full care of the administrative procedures. When I attended the funeral, I was shocked and saddened by the lack of people. There would have been no one there but his wife if the PCI guys hadn't come. Everyone who could make themselves available did so. (fieldnotes)

An enduring way of life thus rests upon strong forms of belongingness, fueled by dense social ties developed outside the factory. The socio-spatial connectivities across work and home, through which intimacy and friendship are experienced daily, make their collective extremely resilient and hard for the management to break down. Connected with a strong working-class culture, these shift and family spirits contribute to the perpetuation of collective insubordination, as we illustrate in the next subsection.

Practices of collective insubordination

Shift-workers' practices are also based on rebellious sociabilities and exclusionary mechanisms that subvert social relationships within the factory, planting the seeds of a collective and continuous resistance. Specific workplaces become the locus of active everyday social struggles where workers wish to concretely establish and ostensibly show their insubordination, thus establishing it as normal.

Territorial exclusiveness at work

Shift-workers' resistance rests upon strong forms of belongingness which lead to the collective appropriation of physical spaces at work, where they can overtly display their proud

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rebelliousness and feel "*like at home.*" Their spatial appropriation of the control room and the refectory enables the construction of their own physical, social and symbolic *exclusive* territory where insubordination to management becomes a norm.

Shift-workers indeed strive to ostensibly affirm their social territory at work, where boundaries are first physically expressed by the spatial and warlike appropriation of the refectory. Erected as a symbolical bastion against non-shift workers, the rejection dynamic towards "intruders" tells a lot about the material and symbolic ownership of the group, throwing a clear light regarding who "belongs" and who does not:

> I'm heading with Loic to the refectory for a coffee. I note that the porthole on the door is covered by a sign: "*Reserved for shift personnel and affinity*". This sign covers the view and prevents outsiders from seeing what's going on inside the room. I ask Loic about the purpose of this sign, and what "*affinity*" means. Loic tells me that after the building relocation following the merger, "*Anyone entered and made themselves at home here.*" But they ended up "*kicking them out,*" making it clear to the hierarchy that it was their restricted space. They also kicked out "*all the day folks who work upstairs*" and wished to come eat here with their lunch boxes. He insists that the refectory is their "*place of retreat … a private, personal space to which only PCI shift-workers have access. And affinity means the ones we like*" (for instance Jeannot, a former shift-worker now working office hours upstairs for medical reasons, or Frank and Benjamin, former temporary workers who now work as subcontractors in the plant). He adds: "*There is no hierarchy in here.*" (fieldnotes)

The refectory thus acts as a symbolic barricade, a physical fortified shelter that is difficult for a "foreigner" to cross and where shift-workers come to take refuge from "others." Exceptions are made for former shift-workers. Yet, as Loic said: "*there are exceptions but not too many, or else we're no longer at home.*"

Shift-workers have also appropriated the control rooms as their own territory: while they cannot prohibit other people from entering for work purposes, they are overtly unwelcoming to non-shift workers, especially when they linger too long. Their irritation and contempt towards others have been regularly observed:

> I leave the interview with Edouard [a manager]: he wants to accompany me to the factory's gate. We go down the stairs and enter the control room, where Patrick is talking with my father and Romain. We talk for a few minutes before noticing that Edouard - a well-dressed and sophisticated man - does not seem comfortable being here. He remains quiet and looks at his shoes. I then notice that throughout the whole conversation Patrick, with a blue suit, a helmet and many tools attached, was literally *staring* at him (he even looked at him from head to toe multiple times), without talking. I felt Edouard's discomfort: he stayed for only a short time and decided not to accompany me to the nearby gate. He quickly told me goodbye and left discreetly. Once he left, Patrick asked me, nodding in his direction: "*The fuck was he doing here?*" (fieldnotes)

Patrick's words show how unusual it is for non-shift workers to *stay* in the control room, which shift workers have appropriated for themselves. Although this room is a crossing point –

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meaning that everyone can enter - it is famously known as a place where non-shift-workers are not welcome. Managers and administrative employees are often described as "*hugging the walls*" when they must go through the room.

> Chatting with the guys in the refectory. They're talking about Thierry: "*He's hugging the walls right now,*" they joke. Indeed, the PCI unit manager would prefer to enter the building through the small door of the infirmary rather than the main entrance, located in the control room, where all the team is waiting behind the control screens. This is a significant detour, as it means bypassing the whole building. (fieldnotes)

Shift-workers thus establish their uniqueness in space, giving them a high sense of belongingness, which is then bolstered by subversive appropriation of exclusive working spaces. Most shift-workers believe they have every right to appropriate "their" unit: day folks, who are just *"paper workers… office and file clerks who don't know how to say 'no' to their chief"* (Pedro) have no part in it:

> *"Sometimes I have the feeling that shift-workers see their unit as their 'property'… They remake the world together and feel entitled to do whatever they want with their unit."* (Corinne, administrative employee)

The enduring resistance in the factory is thus largely oriented towards preserving territories that provide workers with a sense of superiority that is marked in each everyday encounter. In these spaces, workers bond mainly through traditional working-class activities (meals and gatherings, pranks, competitions, football games in the sheds, etc.) aimed at claiming their own time and space at work. Shift-workers' practices of belongingness are crystallized in these specific working spaces where everyday insubordination becomes an expected behavior.

Everyday overt subversions

Enduring resistance thereby emerges from the material and symbolic ownership of concrete territories where shift-workers can give free rein to their rebellious working-class sociabilities, establishing everyday insubordination as a common norm.

First, shift workers regard these appropriated spaces as *places of life*, where intense subversive sociability is practiced, and in which the collective rebuilds itself after the damage resulting from the post-merger configuration. Indeed, they organize in their territory traditional meals that play a paramount role in strengthening the work collectives. These heavy meals are often served with prohibited alcoholic drinks. Lively discussions and stories help to revitalize the group by sharing collective memories. These events are of great symbolic importance, as evidenced by the many jokes told to the fieldworker or the simple fact that formal interviews were often disturbed for "*food imperatives*" as illustrated by the following field notes:

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> Right after I was introduced to Ludovic, he told me: "*If you're looking for a job here, can you even bake cakes?*"
>
> At the 97th minute of my interview with Serge, Jimmy knocks on the door of the room. Without waiting for our answer, he passes his head by the door, letting a strong smell of fried food into the room. He literally shouts at us: "*Well, fuckers, when you're done making babies, maybe we can fucking eat!*" I cut the interview short and head to the refectory. The whole team was waiting for us: it's time to eat.

Through these transgressive behaviors, shift-workers "*make themselves at home*" by reproducing their out-of-work sociabilities. Such practices indeed are directed at remaining in control of their working place and time, as the following fieldnotes illustrate:

> 10.pm. Start of the shift, everyone is in blue overalls. We gather around the control screen table and talk, waiting for Lucas, who is late. He finally arrives at 10.30pm: everyone claps when he enters the room. Lucas doesn't go directly to change his clothes: he joins us at the table, and everyone chats a little. It was only after 40 minutes that he debriefed with Maxime to officially replace him.

These territories are also suited to other socializing collective activities, such as football games in the sheds or movie parties behind the control room screens. The absence of managers affords the place an aspect of uncontrollable playground:

> Thibaud goes to the switchboard. Two minutes later, loud popular music blares everywhere, through all the intercoms. […] Jimmy takes the wheel of the truck and drives toward the lobby. He messes around with it, driving in jerking motions and honking the horn regularly to piss everyone off (it is quite loud). He triggers the sirens, laughing behind the wheel. (fieldnotes)

In their appropriation of working spaces, shift-workers highly value traditional shop floor humor, based on swearing and pranks as well as physical strength, frankness, and slang (Collinson, 1988). They develop a strong feeling of social recognition by collectively reproducing numerous transgressive practices traditionally associated with the masculine working-class culture, starting with raw self-affirmative language and relaxed postures, which strongly contrast with corporate behaviors:

> Loic leaves the room but comes back 5 minutes later to insult the guys: someone messed up his radio to piss him off. He leaves again yelling "*fuck you suckers*" across the room, while everyone's laughing. Talking about radio, Gaetan pursues by saying that he prefers to fix it between his pants and his butt, so that he can better "*scratch his big balls*". Loic turns to me and says: "*See, welcome to the poets house!*" (fieldnotes)

Also revealing are the numerous "dirty" pranks that workers play on each other: putting plastic film on the toilet bowl, replacing toilet paper with sandpaper, and putting dead fish in the work shoes of victims on their days off, for example. These pranks, in sharp contrast with the policed language and attitudes expected by the management, also appear collectively as a distorted reflection of the inter-individual competition advocated by the managerial evaluation. Indeed,

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while workers are expected to compete based on performance, the pranks that workers play appear as a reverse process of these professional rivalries. When asked by the fieldworker about the level of competition among shift-workers, Kevin's response was typical: "*Of course I compete with the others, but mostly in bullshit.*" These practical jokes play an important role in tightening the social ties within shift teams:

> We take coffee and laugh from 2.15am to 3.40am. I note that on several occasions Ruben, on my right, repeats "*I fucking knew I was gonna have a good time tonight! Guys, I knew I was going to have fun tonight.*" (fieldnotes)

This appropriation of working spaces leads to systemic patterns of practical solidarity, contradicting the principles of competition between workers. For example, it is common to send the "pools" (the workers who are only here to support the activity) back home when managers are not around:

> Thibaud enters the refectory with a pink sheet of paper […]. It is a "release form," releasing him from duty. Thibaud then leaves the plant to go back home, and 45 minutes later calls Loic to tell him he got home safe. Loic then tears up the paper form. When I asked Loic why he threw this paper away, he responded: "*so he'll get paid for the eight hours anyway, as if he stayed on post.*" (fieldnotes)

Similarly, managerial devices resulting from the post-merger configuration are subjected to transgressive reappropriation. This is particularly salient with the observation of radio use by shift workers according to the time of their shift. Radios are used by shift workers in the plant as a crucial tool to coordinate their teamwork. During business hours, the management also use the radios to track workers' progress and evaluate their dedication at work. Because shift workers never know when they are listened to, they tend to use the tool according to managerial expectations:

> "*People try too hard to put themselves in the spotlight. […] With radio talks you can see that, because all the time you have to show that you are here. You end up talking about everything you do. It's ME I go, ME I do, ME I set up this. ME ME ME.*" (Pierrick)

But radio has another use and meaning once shift-workers are on their own:

> Fieldworker: Radio discussions are always the same? During night you talk…
> P: *It's totally different. There's no radio commentaries, or rather… it's just like jokes, insults, y'know. Oh yes, if there is REALLY something going on, but… no, it's really different […] At night it will more be like, "Where are you, fucker?" Or, "Is the pizza ready yet?". Whereas during day times, it's not like that at all. It's over-faking work, like ME I go to the pipeline, ME I go to the lab, …*". (Pierrick)

The boundaries drawn around their working spaces are also fueled by the strong sense of antagonism they experience vis-à-vis "day folks", who don't share the same social characteristics or struggles. Shift workers indeed do not understand the so-called "docility" of

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these administrative employees, sometimes also scornfully called "yes sir" people (i.e., workers who cannot say "no" to their manager). Connected with a strong local working-class culture, their "shift-spirit" therefore contributes to the internalization of a dissident pattern. This is salient through shift-workers' pride in displaying raw behaviors and language contrasting with the "politeness" of "day-folks":

> Saïd proudly describes being part of a group that has a "*strong character*": "*We are lions.*" […]. He describes a shift worker's temperament as being "'*blunt*' … *the one who has his tongue in his pocket, he gets eaten.*" However, he insists: "*Once you have shown that you fit in, it's pretty tight… It's raw, but you won't see anything fishy here.*" (fieldnotes)

These subversive sociabilities lead to a strong rejection of the docile behaviors allegedly displayed by "day folks":

> "*I would never want to work among day folks. Never. We haven't the same DNA. They're all panicking in front of their superiors. Us, we don't give a fuck.*" (Saïd)

This working-class sociability and pride also maintains strong boundaries and overtly insubordinate behaviors by shift-workers toward management. Indeed, despite the post-merger configuration, shift-workers do not lose their "*pride to fight*" (Saïd) the hierarchy. On the contrary, such pride is an integral part of the collective values shared by shift workers, according to whom the symbolical traditional distinction between "them" and "us" remains a fundamental social geography of factory life. This *ethos of resistance* (Courpasson & Marti, 2019) is particularly manifested through their speeches and behaviors towards managers. Many brag about some "fights" they had with the management, and even greet each other with anecdotes of their defiant attitudes towards managers:

> I enter the shed, where Loic is talking to Denis [shift-worker in another unit]. Patrick comes in and without saying "hi", immediately greets Denis with: "*Ah bah! I pissed off your boss the last day!*" to which Denis immediately replies: "*Ah bah you did well, you should've sprayed that prick!*" (fieldnotes)

We noted recurrent similar everyday narratives about conflicts with the hierarchy, which are highly expected among shift-workers and form an integral part of their practices of belongingness. This defying and provocative attitude towards the hierarchy) is enacted *in situ* and often in the very presence of managers, as regularly observed during fieldwork:

> Escorted by Thierry, with whom I have an appointment for an interview, I pass by the control room where the current PCI team is working. I stop for a minute to greet them, and join Thierry who was waiting for me on the doorstep of the room. Just before we left, one of guys said, loud enough to be heard, "*the bastard of a boss*". I noticed by his face that Thierry has heard it too, but didn't react. (fieldnotes)

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The management has tried to break this dynamic by implementing numerous inter-unit job transfers, thought to break these "territories" through the introduction of "*new kids on the block*":

> "*A shift, it's a family… they always work together, they spend nights and weekends together. [...] How do you break that? Well, you break it by mixing them, by bringing in people from all over the place. [...] When I came here, the message was clear. I was told: 'Thierry, you have to mix the teams, it's going to be good.'*" (Thierry, PCI manager)

The intermixing of teams was expected to deconstruct shift-worker collectives and dynamics, by preventing too much familiarity between them. However, these measures did not work: interviewees attribute the resilience of their "*shift spirit*" to the constant interplays between space and time and home and work, which inevitably solidify the teams:

> "*When I arrived here, I was welcomed with whisky! [laughs] Once the bosses have left, we talk a lot, we stay two hours drinking coffee or else* [finger pointing toward a cupboard, where bottles of alcohol are stocked]. *Dart games, beers, football in the shed... and parties at each other's homes. There's a work atmosphere here, actually I don't know if it exists elsewhere. We turn out more like friends than colleagues. It necessarily ends up going beyond work.*" (Kevin)

As a result, such everyday encounters by workers bear concrete political effects that, accumulated over time, shape a representation of their resistance as influential, even if not accepted as legitimate by management. This partially explains why managers themselves present shift workers as a population traditionally "*very hard to manage*":

> "*Shift-workers are a nuisance. You cannot manage shift-workers like day folks. It's really hard to manage shift-workers.*" (Jean, former PCI manager)

> After I asked, Marie [head of social relations] printed and showed me her job description after the interview. I looked at it on my way back and was surprised to read, written at the beginning of an official job description: "*The head of HR carries out his/her duties in a conflicting and rarely constructive social context within the establishment.*" (fieldnotes)

The plant director himself confessed in his interview that when shift workers threaten to stop the machines, "[*management*] *has to negotiate*":

> "*With only 10 guys, you can rip the plant apart. [...] If they don't want to work and you can't replace them, you're fucked, you have to talk, you have to negotiate with them. [...]If tomorrow my managers start a strike and ask me for a raise, I'd say no. But if the guys in the units tell me we want a raise or we give you shit, I will not necessarily say yes, but at least we'll talk.*" (Stephane, director)

This illustrates the extent to which shift-workers' subversive practices become part of the very functioning of the organization. As unambiguously expressed by Saïd when asked about their ordinary insubordination: "*Why and how I don't know, but truth is it doesn't change* [laughs]. *We're known for that!*"

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Our data thus highlight the professional, social and geographical conditions that enable a group of working-class workers to perpetuate a high sense of belongingness and, eventually, to keep their dissident pattern active in a hostile context of neoliberal restructuring. Their collective insubordination is comprised of instances and places where resisters overtly display their power, creating enduring patterns of resistance that management is forced to include in its own politics.

Discussion

This paper demonstrates that workers' collective resistance can remain a constitutive response to neoliberal contexts of domination. The collective production of enduring resisting patterns indeed appears as abnormal in such contexts, where expected norms rather sustain subjugation to competitive social relations. Empirically, we illuminate how practices of belongingness and collective insubordination are closely intertwined, thereby allowing resistance in the factory to endure. Workers indeed demonstrate their belongingness through their very insubordination. Reciprocally, this insubordination becomes expected by workers themselves. It marks most of their interactions, at work and home alike, and is therefore experienced as a way of reconciling the two realms. Everyday life in this group of workers is fundamentally characterized by subversion and defiance toward management. This analysis confirms the power of interactions within a close-knit group (Sutherland, 1949) that can be analyzed as a "social cocoon" (Greil & Rudy, 1984) serving as a bulwark against the pressures of neoliberal management. Put differently, the resistance of the group of workers is partly based on social modalities that are motivated to construct and maintain a sense of the vivid necessity of insubordinate behaviors. Insubordination becomes 'regular,' although not mundane. This in turn fosters normative control within the group by generating a set of unique relationships among the individuals, based on the vehemence of their opposition to management as well as their systematic participation in meaningful subversive social practices (Shortt, 2015).

Another empirical contribution of this study is to show that the practices of belongingness developed by workers are politically effective because they rest upon *territorial* norms of conduct, based on certain shared representations of what a 'true' shift worker ought to be. Belongingness is therefore strongly related to place-making (Cresswell, 2004). The active socio-spatial production of insubordination is generated by the construction of an exclusive view and practice of both geographical and social boundaries around the group of resisters. This suggests that insubordination is not a fixed, temporary or static individual gesture, but a

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relational process emerging from place-based interactions – i.e., relations that are purposefully chosen to matter when and where a concrete encounter with the 'adversary' is happening. Resisters' insubordination is thus undergirded by both the geographical constitution of their "fun" places and the symbolic representation of these places as special places that only carefully chosen individuals may access. In these places, resistance is seen as almost natural, inherent to the expected behavior of the people inhabiting them.

Third, our data suggest that managers perceive the enduring force of workers' collective resistance as influencing the political relations of the factory. Our data show that this political significance is shaped in unpredictable but locally meaningful configurations: resistance is significant because it is how the PCI workers see their life, embracing issues of both factory politics and outside life in the same movement. This suggests a complex interplay between life inside and outside the factory, in which the usual categorical binary structures of resistance are negated. Resistance of the PCI workers represents rebellion against the neoliberal odds as a permanent feature of social life: Elyachar (2014) calls resistance "the stuff of everyday life." Put differently, resistance is a way of life that is supported by social conditions involving co-workers who all defend the mutually constituted experience of belongingness and insubordination. This collective resistance is so deeply entrenched that it is preferable for management to include it in the organizational power relations, rather than overtly resisting it. The expression of identification with the shift-work group is thus ultimately reflected in the factory politics (as seen in the job definition of the HR head), which could also be interpreted as a form of neutralization of its potential destructive effects on the organization.

The endurance of resistance that we descriptively analyze through the entwinement of belongingness and insubordination has theoretical implications. We specifically propose a way to rethink the political significance of everyday resistance through the lens of resistance as a way of life, to contribute to a more fruitful dialogue between recognition and post-recognition politics (Fleming, 2016).

<u>Resistance as a way of life.</u>

The paper shows that the entwinement of belongingness and insubordination allows everyday resistance to galvanize agency in lively acts of resistance, involving humor, objects, places and gestures that are the very reflections of a collective life, and that in turn help to perpetuate the social and affective boundaries of the group. In other words, *protesting* neoliberal rules is tightly interrelated with *protecting* the life of the group. The practice of resistance draws upon specific

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organizational capabilities, but mostly on experiences and emotions, produced by the life they live together at work and at home. Our data show that for workers, taking control of their everyday activities is a way to create a culture of resistance (Gaventa, 1980; O'Hearn, 2009, p. 497) that is strongly connected with their owned environment. In that view, it is impossible to separate the factory from the home to think resistance. The very process of insubordination and the achievement of small victories is empowering, providing encouragement for the group to draw further on its collective life to neutralize subordinate relations and replace them with more humanizing relations among themselves: the personal becomes "*inextricably linked to the collective*" (Voglis, 2002, p. 533). This means that resisters act in concert with each other, reinforcing the intersubjective effects of their actions with respect to each other and the managerial authorities. Insubordination is an expression of how workers want to live their life, both within and outside of the factory walls. Workers' way of life is incompatible with managerial neoliberal measures. Therefore, the group of workers is the very instantiation of resistance itself, because it unites home and work in the same effort to overcome neoliberal forces. This resistance is even more powerful, we argue, because it blurs the usual boundaries between the [political] public sphere and the [a-political] private sphere (Ludtke, 1985). This permits a different view of everyday resistance than a mundane exercise aiming to defy authority or express spontaneous revolt because it rests upon the power of the symbols of life underlying each act of insubordination: taking long meal breaks, using the shop floor as a playground, or overtly mocking managers. By playing on these fundamental symbols of life, resistance achieves the double effect of protecting inter-individual social relations *and* upholding relations of authority within the factory.

Thus, our study shows a political collective defiance that surpasses the current focus of research on *"[a-political] individual defiance"* (Poutain & Robins, 2000, quoted in Mumby, 2016, p. 895) because it is experienced as a *way of life*. Seeing resistance that way, we argue, helps to reposition the analysis of resistance *within* social life, rather than as an exotic abnormal activity (Theodossopoulos, 2014). In order to account for the effectiveness of resistance, we need to recontextualize resisting processes in the here and now of social life. Beyond isolating resistance in hidden transcripts of subaltern consciousness (Scott, 1990; Theodossopoulos, 2014), scholars should focus on the local meaningfulness of resistance in intimate contexts of social life (Hertzfeld, 1997) where resisting patterns are generated. Indeed, failure of organizational research to account for collective resistance as credible way to oppose oppressive powers may come from the valorization of a figure of the modern individual as passive (Elliott,

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2011, p. 260) or as looking outside of the factory walls to envisage her agency (Fleming, 2016). Collective resistance as way of life, meaning as an enduring social praxis, sustained by neighborhood and friendship ties, is therefore largely liquidated by this view.

<u>Reconciling recognition and post-recognition politics.</u>

These aspects bring us back to the possible dialogue between recognition and post-recognition views of organizational politics (Courpasson, 2016; Fleming, 2016). Post-recognition views focus on what is left when resistance is emptied from its material and situated substance. Resistance shifts from struggles over the capacity of workers to determine their concrete conditions of work, to the indeterminacy of meaning, affect and value in the organization and beyond (Mumby, 2020; Skeggs, 2014), in short, to the everyday construction of self. The consequence of this move is the relocation of the point of production to individuals, suppressing the 'shopfloor' as the central place of resistance, because the "*self's measure of effectiveness thus lies within the self*" (Mumby, 2020, p. 8). In this perspective, collective resistance resting upon the reproduction of communal relations among workers is hardly credible. What concentrates individuals' energy is the achievement of the self (Collinson, 2003), always subjected to internal self-constraints that are individualistic obsessive achievements (Han 2017). In this post-recognition view of politics, collective socialities and their mutual constitution with factory-based forms of resistance are rejected at the margins: the result is that this version of politics run the risk of considering opposition as nothing more than the "*muttered defiance behind the back of the dominants*" (Gledhill, 2012, p. 6), hardly politically articulated. . In contrast, our study aims to put the interplay between situated resistance and local socialities at the center of the analysis of organizational politics.

We consequently engage a dialogue between post-recognition and recognition politics, rather than separate them. We show that when resistance is experienced as firmly placed *within* life, it permits workers' emancipation from neoliberalism achieved within factory walls, which is also an emancipation "*for [its] own sake*" (Fleming, 2016, p. 108). In a sense, seeing resistance as a way of life entails both the complete achievement of 'traditional' recognition politics, and the production of a peculiar autonomous relation to work in a neoliberal context that is sustained by outside-of-work sociability. The combination of both 'modes' of politics enables collective resistance to be incorporated as an integral element of corporate policies, not as a resource to introduce effective change for the organization (Ford, Ford & d'Amélio, 2008), but as an emancipatory project *within* the neoliberal machine.

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In our study, workers regard their insubordination not as mere resistance to management, but rather as integral to their life, blurring the usual lines separating the factory walls from the outside world. Workers are not insubordinate only for reasons related to work itself. The accumulation of everyday subversive practices reinforces the complicity among them, thus strengthening their sense of community and empowerment. Not only do workers challenge and defy managers "*to show their muscles,*" but the mutual constitution of insubordination and belongingness substantially shapes how they see their collective life within *and* outside of the factory. As a result, their constant practice of resistance is not a disguised or hidden effort with no explicit political purpose: it is indeed made visible and recognizable by the very existence of strong, long lasting boundaries around the group that workers spend time to erect and sustain. Everyday resistance is therefore both a kind of 'life style' within the boundaries of a social cocoon, *and* a collective endeavor that is made politically visible and active, and subsequently handled by managers as such.

This combinatory view of resistance also complements the infra-political perspective (Marche, 2012; Scott, 1990, 2012): infra-politics suggest acts that unobtrusively sneak into the public scene without being entirely identified as such. Their action is "*always pressing, testing, probing the boundaries of the permissible*" (Scott 1990, p. 200). But infra-politics are by definition "*beneath the threshold of the 'political'*" (Marche, 2012, p. 5). This paper spotlights workers who have managed to ensure a regular and accepted access to recognized political channels in the organization, therefore exerting resistance from within these very channels, through their quotidian insubordination and the 'expulsion' of management from their appropriated places. This direct contribution to the organizational political life is close to what a Scottian terminology would call a "workers' public transcript" operating "in the face" of management, rather than only "infiltrating" the public managerial transcript founded on neoliberal measures. The practices of belongingness and insubordination serving as concrete supports of this transcript are not constrained by management, not because they aren't noticed but precisely because they are, thereby becoming integrated into the usual political relations at the factory.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have illustrated the power of a collective resistance sustained by the mutual constitution of belongingness and insubordination. We have shown that resistance is impactful

because it is inscribed within the very texture of workers' social life. This helps to continue bringing together resistance and its actual socio-geographical context, instead of rejecting resistance as a matter out of place and time. This engaged version of resistance illustrates its purposefulness as a way of life, through the constant intricacies between shop floor struggles and life itself.

We should neither romanticize nor downplay the resistance studied in this paper. For our informants, resistance is part of the best times of their life, but signs of the inescapable force of neoliberalism remain everywhere. The peculiarities of the investigated terrain should prevent us from any attempt to generalize our findings. It remains that further research should focus more on how such strong and undoubtedly rare intersubjective relations between resistance and life may conclude, and what's next for the workers after their struggle has possibly ended. The future of such politics will largely decide whether neoliberalism is decidedly the unique ingredient of social lives at work, or whether collective patterns of resistance and solidarity are likely to survive.

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Appendix

Figure 1.