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Transmission of Experience through Narrative: a Case Study

It is a question of a small team of “technician-advisors” for professional accident and sickness prevention who are developing a practice of rupture within a relatively decentralized institution. Responsible for the execution of programs conceived by their supervisors, they are creating for their activity, spaces of liberty. From 1979 to 1997, their story will show proof of a will to escape from technical and enclosure by rules and regulations to which others would have them confined. For them, it is a question of establishing a prevention from within, based on the needs of the producers considered as participants and interconnected by a professional network and not on an outside “expertise”.

In spite of the annual activity reports it produces, and the kinds of training it proposes (representations, problem resolution, communication), the team is convinced of a theoretical lack that needs to be compensated for. The team has therefore addressed itself to two researchers and with them has created a formalization group.

At the same time, the objective of the latter is two-fold. They want to create a space for a kind of expression, which by definition, is forbidden. The technicians had neither the right to speak about their activities outside of the workplace, nor to exchange their experiences with their colleagues. The researchers desire to promote the transmission of this novel experience by way of a written document.

Generally speaking, within the universe of the workplace, man (the human factor) is a pejorative category. Moreover, there exists a denial of the work, the subject, and the animate. Work is the domain of the filthy, the hidden, and the ignoble, contrary to the arts, letters and the sciences. The absence of major literary expression in the field of know-how and skilled labor is symptomatic of this. It is thought that a person is so attached to his job that distance needs to be put between the two in order to allow for a second opinion from a third party (a collective) of from the proposed mode of formalization: the narration of events.