

INTERVIEW

INTRODUCTION AND EXPANSION OF THE PSYCHODYNAMICS AT WORKPLACE IN BRAZIL: INTERVIEW WITH DEJOURS

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The context of the interview

During the postdoctoral period, while conducting her séjour at the CNAM- *Conservatoire des Arts et Metiers*, Kátia Barbosa Macêdo spoke to Dr. Christophe Dejours on November 29, 2016 with the objective of gathering data that could help in the understanding and in the historical constitution of the introduction and expansion of the Psychodynamics of work in Brazil, as well as the aspects related to approach methodology.

How was the beginning of the connection of Psychodynamics of work with Brazil?²

In July 1984, there was a Franco-Brazilian seminar in São Paulo with French researchers Helena Hirata, who was in the organization, and Anie Thebout, who was a health sociologist. It was an important event that received twenty French researchers to discuss different themes: ergonomics, economics, sociology, psychology, work psychopathology, epidemiology, toxicology. It was the first time I went to Brazil. There I met several Brazilians who were or were attending Wisner's lab: Laerte Idal Sznelwar, Neire dos Santos. They were Wisner students. One of the people who mediated and who was very important was Helena Hirata. Helena Hirata and Leda Leal Ferreira, who was also linked to Wisner. I was still a hospital doctor.

*After this seminar the Brazilians decided to translate the book *Travail, usure mental*, which was translated, in Portuguese, as *A loucura do trabalho*. Because of this, I returned to Brazil three years later, 1987, for the book's launch. A person who played an important role in the book's launch was João Guilherme Vargas Neto, who was a Brazilian mathematician by training, and a refugee in France during the dictatorship and that when he returned to Brazil he went to work as a union leader. The book was published by Oboré Editora, which, together with the trade unionists, organized some trips through Brazil to hold conferences to publicize the work. There was a lot of move in relation to the book that represented a march to discuss matters of interest of the union and addressed politics. At that time the original was the approach of work psychopathology. He demonstrated and discussed the importance of work for life, ordinary life, city life, society, and mental health. It is true that the development of work psychodynamics in Brazil at that time benefited greatly from all connections previously established by Wisner with researchers and universities, based on ergonomics. It is true that the Brazilian ergonomists received and welcomed the Psychodynamics of Work. It was benefited by all the connections previously built by Wisner. This is the pre-history. "The Fundacentro played an important role."*

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² It was adopted as a caption the notation of the interventions of the interviewer in bold, and the respondent's answers in quotation marks and italics, in order to facilitate the reader's understanding.

After this first phase, several other books were also translated, some researchers began to come to Paris to know the laboratory, to do research and to be trained in psychodynamics of work with you. Which do you consider to have played an important role in promoting and developing Psychodynamics of Work in Brazil?

I think that before talking about the second stage, there was Maria Irene Betiol, a professor at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, who played an important role in translating the book. There were several meetings with people there, among them Edith Seligmam-Silva, another important person at that time, Arakcy, a sociologist³, who was the thesis supervisor of Seiji Uchida. She was very important. A person who played an important role in disseminating the psychopathology of work was Irene Hirata, she was fundamental, since she had connections between France and Brazil, and disclosed the psychodynamics of work among Brazilian sociologists.

*Through the ergonomists and sociologists, there was also a dissemination among the engineers, who had an interest in the translation of the book *Fator Humano*. The engineers were also interested in Psychodynamics in work medicine too.*

In 1997, when I went to a conference in Brasília, I met Julia Abrahão. She studied ergonomics in France for many years. After that, there are other people who have played an important role.

Laerte Idal was very important, he did his doctoral thesis in ergonomics with Wisner, and then was trained in Psychodynamics of work. He began to implement these dimensions of analysis at the Polytechnic School of USP.

Heliete Karan, took doctorate classes in Psychology with me at CNAM, defended her thesis in 1997, and continues to research and disseminate the Psychodynamics of Work in Brazil.

Then Selma Lancman also, in 2000 she spent a long time here at Cnam, she is actually trained in Psychodynamics of work by it, not in ergonomics. She studied and dialogued with other parallel disciplines, such as psychiatry, psychopathology. She was the first Brazilian to be trained in Psychodynamics of work by me at CNAM.

Ana Magnolia Mendes also came to the CNAM in 2006. She spent a period of three months here in the lab, and she did a good work. She understood the psychodynamics of work very well and very quickly. At that time she did an intensive work with me. After returning to Brazil, she set up a laboratory at UnB in Brasília, held several congresses that I participated in. She set up events and I participated in various activities at the beginning, and I participated in some of them for a few years, but that has dissipated over time.

Álvaro Merlo went later. He wrote his thesis in France, he came here a few times, but then returned to Porto Alegre. He does not specifically work with psychodynamics of work. Álvaro, who I like very much, is not a psychologist, nor a clinician, nor a psychiatrist. He is a labor physician.

It is still important to mention other Brazilians who were also at the CNAM. Among them we have: Elisabeth Zulmira who was tutored by Ana Magnolia and was here at the CNAM, and she works in Brasília with Psychodynamics with Heliete Karan. Seiji Uchida. Francilene obtained her doctorate at the CNAM. Juliana Barros, tutored by Selma Lancman, came to take a sandwich course here, she worked hard here. she studied the subjective work of the doctors responsible for the emergencies at the University Hospital of USP. She knew well the psychodynamics of work and was very well received by the other researchers in the research group. Maria Amélia is a psychiatrist, she came here taking a sandwich course from her doctorate at the Federal University of Goiás, she wrote her thesis on the mental health of medical students. Katia Brazil came through a sandwich scholarship, spent a year studying here, while writing her thesis supervised by Francisco Martins. She worked a lot in the year she was here, she is interested in psychosomatics. Leda Ferreira, she had already received her doctorate in ergonomics with Wisner here at Cnam, and she spent a time on postdoctoral with me on Psychodynamics. She is a very important reference. Another important researcher is Maria Bernadete Macêdo, who came to take a training course with sandwich scholarship while developing her thesis with

³ It is important to note that Professor Arakcy had a background in philosophy, and later in psychology in the psychoanalytic approach, and not in sociology as Dejours stated.

Daniel Kergoat. She discussed a lot with us about her thesis, participated in the laboratory activities and learned a lot about Psychodynamics.

With which Brazilian researchers do you currently develop joint projects?

The first is the group from USP, which has Selma Lancman, Laerte Idal and Seiji Uchida, they develop several researches using the psychodynamics of work.

In Brasília, currently there is the group from the Catholic of Brasília, with Katia Brazil.

Another important group currently for me is the one who develops research in the Brazilian judiciary with Leonardo Wandeli, who is a judge and carries out important work in the area of law. He published the book *O direito humano e fundamental no trabalho: fundamentação e exigibilidade*, by Leonardo Wandeli, which is not exclusive to Psychodynamics, but is good.

I have other relationships with researchers in Brazil, some related to

Psychoanalysis and psychosomatic: In Belo Horizonte, Maria Tereza Carvalho Ribeiro, who works with her husband, Paulo Carvalho on psychoanalysis and psychosomatic at work. In Rio de Janeiro, Marta Rezende Cardoso. In Porto Alegre, a psychoanalyst named José Carlos Calich. In João Pessoa, some psychoanalysts linked to the Jean Laplanche Foundation, in which I am one of the directors. In São Paulo, Sedes Sapientiae, there is a working group in this institute, directed by Mario Fucks. There is a training on psychodynamic of work there. Kátia Barbosa Macêdo, who uses the psychodynamics of work in researches and develops partnerships with MPT and TRT in Goiás as well.

What do you consider as characteristic of the methodological proposal of the Psychodynamics of work?

From the point of view of science, psychodynamics is very broad, multidisciplinary; has relation with other disciplines, with the public space, with the political duties, with the media, with the law, with the judges, with philosophy. The research in Psychodynamics of work is not about to collect data and then to analyze them, is a process where the researcher builds with the collective of workers, an understanding of the meaning of the work, of their subjective mobilization in relation to their work.

From the point of view of the method, the most important is the possibility of holding meetings with the collective, setting up work groups with company workers. With workers from ministries or administrations, it matters little whether they are public or private. To be able to set up a group of volunteer workers to reflect on the issues of the relations between them and from the questions about the difficulties encountered by them in the exercise of work, and to return to the issues of subjectivity and organization of work.

The prescribed method provides some steps for conducting a research on Psychodynamics: demand, pre-research, research itself, validation of the report. What do you consider the key to a research based on psychodynamics of work?

The first point is about the research, this research is not looking for data, the research is looking to understand how people understand the work and how they do to deal with the organization of work, with the real of work. Negotiating means finding a solution or agreement that allows them to avoid becoming sick. It is just the normality, of how people do to put up with this relationship before the real.

Ask how people live how they defend themselves and protect themselves from the deleterious effects of work. Eventually, it also involves verifying what are the sources of pleasure at work. Because in these conditions there is really pleasure and enthusiasm in relation to work. Why?

The most important is to gather the work as it allows you to apprehend things about work, things that could be raised by individual interviews. It is because within this collective discussion there is not only a discussion between the workers and the researchers, but also a discussion that begins between the members of the working group. It is what makes the object of the discussion between them, are always the questions evidently very significant in view of the problems they occupy. They involve

suffering at work, pleasure at work and above all what is important in this work group is that it is not only a research work.

The problem is trying to understand what they say, what is their relationship with work; what is the relationship with the real of work. Not just data, I try to understand how they face the real. How they find a solution, or on the contrary, how they live in impasses. Suffering accumulates little by little, and leads them to mental illness. The problem is to try to understand this subjective relationship of work in these two dimensions: on the one hand the individual experience in relation to work, and on the other hand, on how these individual experiences enable the division of labor relations, no longer experienced as an individual experience, but becoming shared experiences. That is, the identification in the real of work of what makes people to suffer; they generate the formation of the collective strategies of defenses of the work, to bear the work.

But what interests me in this working group is not just an investigation to understand the meaning. It is not simply an exploration or research. I do not use the term data collection. It is not my concern. When we do this research work on the significance of the relationship and the organization of work, we find that not only do we researchers understand a number of key points about the subjective relationship of work that involves health. In this collective work, in discussing, they discover things they did not know until then. Produce another intelligibility in relation to their own work. Therefore, it is not a data collection because it is certainly a part that is part of the research, and then a part is a perlaboration/working-through of the work by the people. Then it is already an action of transformation of the work. This is a dynamics of the collective of work that is made possible by research. This work of perlaboration/working-through carried out jointly by the researcher and the participating workers is the second important point of the research.

Regarding the result of the process. After the first, the second, the third, the fourth meeting, there is the report. Two restitutions for validation. When we finish this process, not only do we understand much about the subjective relationship of work, not only do they understand new things about work, and more importantly is that, it produces new ideas about the possible transformation of the organization of work. In other words, the collective space for me is so important because it is from this collective that ideas about the action will arise, the rational action arising from workers.

To fulfil this function, the researcher's posture and attitude are differentiated in relation to other research designs. Can you comment a little on this theme?

The researcher develops his research work, not to specifically do research, but to meet the researched workers. He does not adopt the attitude of conduction, he does not give advices. The researcher allows people to discover and begin to think in another way about their relationship with work. Hence, they suggest the solutions found in the process of negotiation and transformation of the organization of work. The solutions that emerge are the solutions invented by themselves. It is not the solution that I (as a researcher) suggested to them, is the solution that they themselves found because they discussed. Action for emancipation. That is to say, something that we will call rational action.

Rational action is in fact fundamentally a possibility for the worker to think about work. It is at the enrichment of thought, which we call technically by perlaboration/working-through of experience. There was a knowledge about the work that was stored, memorized in the form of a learned experience. So necessarily an experience of the body.

We move from this lived experience to perlaboration/working-through. [...] This is the work of the researcher, the researcher's action: to catalyze, to stimulate, to mobilize the capacity of thinking of the people who have the experience. We must rethink what is to perlaborate/work-through. Perlaborating/working-through the experience of work is what until now was not conscious, but nevertheless it was there. This is what we call living work. So it is the perlaboration/working-through that allows the revelation of the living work. This is the principle of collective.

The report is a work of the researcher and therefore must be signed by him. The basis is the statements of others, but the report is signed by the researchers. The groups work from that, and as the report is read, the participants validate it. This validation occurs through their comments, agreeing or disagreeing and suggesting changes. So you can move on to another step, which would be to enrich

the report, by the fact that they can add things by saying: yes, we agree, but ... it is not exactly like that. And from that point on, you can add parts to the report. The report is not only the arrival, nor the outcome, but it can also represent a new starting point. The more you invite people to work from that report, the more action progresses towards the transformation of working relationships. Sometimes it is possible to perform an extended validation.

Do you say extended validation, such as the one that was done, for example, in the research with the National Council of Justice - CNJ?

Yes. Once you have made a report of restitution that is validated by the collective in question, you can use the work that was done by a small group; you can use it to do what we call an extended validation. The extended validation is to propose to other groups to form from the committee on hygiene in labor safety of a company direction to study this report. In the research of CNJ, the difficulty to make the result report of this research was great, mainly because it would be read and evaluated by judges, experts in reading and interpretation of texts. If people disagree with data in the validation, this should be considered for the writing and adjustments of the final report. We started in a court in Curitiba, and this report was read in Porto Alegre. And when people started working on it, the discussion moved on quickly and suddenly, they themselves change their point of view about the work and then they are engaged in a transformation of work in Porto Alegre. Then you can do the same thing in Belo Horizonte or Brasília. Sometimes we cannot even make the restitution, let's go to the validation. Validation is a starting point for starting or not starting the implementation of Psychodynamics in the organization.

Would you like to complement something that has not been addressed?

Yes. The research becomes particularly a mode of intervention that supposes a certain theory of action. It does not happen often that demand knocks at the doors of Cnam or for me. Here, also, you sometimes have to build a demand. Sometimes we have to search for fields that we are interested in conducting a research. Often, in order to have authorization to conduct a research in some organizations, it is necessary that there is a long previous negotiation process. We had great difficulty in accomplishing the research on suicide, taking more than 12 months of negotiation.

The theory is not a habitual theory either of the trade unions or of the traditional political parties. It is a small difference, that is the problem. It is an experience that transforms the traditional view of politicians. It is always the professional specialist. It is either a professional or it is the vanguard of the militant parties that know. There are no professionals, there is not the vanguard. The problem is to start this work, which can be done with a group of operational workers; with a group of farmers; with a group of engineers and also with a group of business leaders.

That is what is new today. We currently have directors of companies that come to demand that we work on "what is to run a company", that is, how the managers work. The opposite of that is the dominant managerial conception. The leader is not a manager; he is someone who also works. What is the task of the leader? In this approach, it is something exciting to find out what leading is. To manage a company the president or the steering committee does a particular type of work by doing an exact analysis of the work of workers. It is from knowing the work of the workers that we know the work of the leader. In fact, it is a bit the same process. It is absolutely interesting and also striking because it works very well.

Kátia Barbosa Macêdo: "That is why I love this approach, a way of using the knowledge of psychoanalysis to understand the work of work". It is the same behavior of the psychoanalyst in relation to his patient, which must be adopted by the researcher when approaching the worker, that is, not to direct, but to follow the elaboration and the perlaboration/working-through of him in relation to his work. It is the group that should do everything, and that is why I like this approach. That is the reason I have been working with Psychodynamics for several years.

I want to thank the opportunity to be here at the CNAM for this séjour and for the interview, which greatly contributed to the clarification of the history of Psychodynamics of work and its entry and expansion into Brazil.

Received: May. 31, 2017

Approved: Jul. 03, 2017

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