

Improving farm working conditions: A proposal to characterise the individual relationship to work. A case study based on French multi-job-holder sheep farmers

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Abstract: *Improving working conditions of livestock farmers is necessary to help farmers to maintain their farming activity, to sustain livestock farming and to re-establish the positive image of the livestock farming profession. To address these challenges, farmers' unions, agricultural extension services and animal scientists are trying to improve the liveability of livestock farming systems. They define liveability as acceptable working conditions in terms of labour and hours, and the possibility of having free time and being able to take holidays. For 30 years, the science of work psychodynamics has maintained that good working conditions depend on a work organisation that makes it possible to combine production and self-fulfilment, where self-fulfilment is thought of as the freedom to express one's self and one's sensitivity to work, as well as his or her sense of well being. This implies that good working conditions differ from one farmer to another, depending on the individual's commitment and expectations, that is, his or her relationship to work. How can we obtain knowledge about individuals' relationships to work so as to improve farmers' working conditions? This paper deals with a way to characterise the individual relationship to farm work. We propose dividing it into a combination of five subjective work rationalities. This analysis was developed from a case study involving multi-job-holder sheep farmers because of both the large number of constraints related to their workload and to the combination of activities and the wide diversity of their motivations in relation to their farming activity. The characterisation of the subjective relationship to work is part of a broader analysis framework that aims at discussing the improvement of farmers' working conditions between farm advisors and farmers.*

Keywords: *livestock farming, multi-job-holder, sheep farming, subjectivity, identity, work rationality*

Introduction

There is a consensus among farmers' unions, extension services and animal scientists that it is necessary to improve livestock farmers' working conditions to help farmers to maintain their farming activity, to sustain livestock farming and to re-establish the positive image of the livestock farming profession. To slow down the decrease in the number of livestock farmers, studies are undertaken to improve farmers' working conditions. They focus on different factors inherent in working conditions: productivity and workload distribution (Martel, *et al.*, 2008; Rémond, *et al.*, 2009; Roguet, *et al.*, 2009), working hours (Dedieu, *et al.*, 2000), the possibility of having free time and being able to take holidays (Madelrieux, *et al.*, 2008a), the difficulty of combining several economic and private activities (Madelrieux, *et al.*, 2008b) and labour (Chauvat, *et al.*, 2009; Roguet, *et al.*, 2009; Saget, *et al.*, 2009). These factors deal only with the objective dimensions of work and working conditions. However, according to the psychodynamics of work, an academic discipline devoted to knowledge about psychological pain as well as psychological pleasure in work situations and that focuses on the relationship between work organisation and workers' mental health, working can not be reduced to a simple production-oriented activity in the objective world (Dejours, 2007). Working does not just serve the purpose of producing and earning money. It also helps us live together and build our identity. To work is to develop and to express our creativity, our intelligence, our freedom and our sensitivity, i.e. to increase our subjectivity. The relationship to work is therefore not just technical or economic. It is also relational and identity-linked. It involves sentiments. Working has a subjective dimension. Working always presents a challenge for subjectivity, for a healthy mental balance;

depending on working conditions, working can enhance subjectivity, be a source of pleasure and a mediator of health or damage subjectivity and generate pain (Dejours, 1993). Therefore, the subjective dimension of working should be taken into account to improve working conditions. Good working conditions are working conditions that preserve mental well-being, that allow subjectivity to grow (Dejours, 1993). They lead to self-fulfilment, *i.e.*, identity, the acquisition of knowledge, affectivity and sensitivity enhancement, and not just the possibility of earning money, reducing labour or having free-time and taking holidays. Improving working conditions requires dealing with the work organisation so that both the objective and subjective dimensions of farm work can be combined. Porcher (2003) showed the distress suffered by some pig and dairy farmers who had acceptable working conditions with respect to working hours and labour, but whose sensitivity and feelings were repressed by the work organisation. This implies that good working conditions and improved work organisation differ from one farmer to another, depending on how the farmer sees himself, what he likes, his commitment to farming and his expectations, in other words, his subjective relationship to work.

This paper deals with how to characterise the subjective relationships of farmers to their work so that farm advisors are able to take them into account to help farmers to improve their working conditions. The proposition consists in dividing the subjective relationships of farmers to their work into a combination of five subjective work rationalities. We show the diversity of coexisting subjective livestock farming rationalities, their consistencies, tensions and contradictions. This methodological proposition is part of a wider analysis framework that makes it possible to globally analyse individual subjective work rationalities, work constraints and technical and organisational choices for the farm in order to improve working conditions.

We chose to study French multiple-job-holder sheep farmers because of the large number of constraints related to their workload and to the combination of activities (Laurent, *et al.*, 2000; Madelrieux, *et al.*, 2004) and the wide diversity of their economic and non-economic expectations from farming (Barlett, 1986; Gasson, 1986). Based on the literature about working in the science of work psychodynamics and interviews with 11 multiple-job-holder sheep farmers about what they expect from farming, we built an analysis framework of the subjective relationship to work.

Materials and methods

Multi-job-holder livestock farmers with different work motivations and work organisation constraints

In the Puy de Dôme region of France, the sheep-breeding sector is faced with problems on how to assist multiple-job-holder livestock farmers. In 2006, we chose eight farms managed by multiple-job-holder sheep farmers from among 35 surveyed in 2004 (Fiorelli, *et al.*, 2007) according to the diversity of their technical and economical motivations and their work organisation constraints. Their breeding strategies differed in relation to technical motivation (from non-existent to considerable) and to the role of livestock farming within a range of activities (a personally-motivated activity without the expectation of income *vs.* a professional family-related activity with the high expectation of income) (Fiorelli *et al.*, *ibid.*). Eight households corresponded to these eight farms, and all of the people within them who worked both on and off the farm were interviewed. These 11 people differed by their motivations with respect to livestock farming, by their gender, age (from 30 to 55 years), family situation (single, living in a couple, with or without children), status on the farm (primary or secondary farm manager, spouse without status), job status (salaried job, independent) and type of profession off the farm, chronology of professional activities (first livestock farmer then multi-job holder, first salaried employee and then multi-job holder, always multi-job holder) (Fiorelli *et al.*, *ibid.*). We supposed that the diversity of people would help us to build an analysis framework of the subjective relationship to work.

“What does livestock farming mean to you?”

To characterise the subjective relationship, we identified what made sense for the farmers at work, what they invested in work and what they expected from work. Representations well reveal the personal sense given to work. In order to gain access to the representation of livestock farming of the people interviewed (Sens, *et al.*, 2001), we carried out non-directive interviews lasting one to two hours that all began with the question, “What does livestock farming mean to you?”. These interviews were recorded and then transcribed in their entirety. The analysis consisted in interpreting what farmers said in terms of livestock farming subjective rationality. Specific attention was given to the first sentence of the interview, repetitions and words that stood out from the ordinary. After the analysis, a profile of each multi-job-holder farmer was drawn up, emphasizing what the farmer seemed to invest in work and expect from it, and discussed with each farmer.

An analytical framework inspired by the work of Dejours (2007) about the psychodynamics of work

Psychodynamics of work

The science of work psychodynamics has been developed in France over the past 30 years. It is a clinical discipline based on the description and knowledge of relationships between work, work organisation and the mental health of the worker. It is also a theoretical discipline that attempts to situate the results of the clinical investigation of the relationship to work within a theory of the subject, taking both psychoanalysis and social theory into account. In this paper, we used the definitions of work, the relationship between work and subjectivity, notions of the subjective relationship to work and the subjective rationalities of work that have been developed within the field of work psychodynamics.

Subjectivity

The psychodynamics of work maintains that work enhances subjectivity and that subjectivity enhances work. Subjectivity is what concerns the individual subject: his or her suffering, pleasure, personal development, self-fulfilment. It shows that work constitutes a decisive challenge for subjectivity, one that can enhance subjectivity (self-fulfilment) or, on the contrary, destroy it (mental pathology).

What is work?

Controversies exist between different scientific disciplines about what work is: a social relationship, a job, a production-related activity, etc. In the psychodynamics of work, work is what is implied, in human terms, in the act of working: gestures, know-how, the involvement of body and intelligence, the ability to analyse, interpret and react to situations to produce something that can be used. It is the power to feel, to think and to invent. For the clinician, working is the way the personality is involved in confronting a task that is subject to material and social constraints. Therefore, work is not, as it is often thought, limited to the actual physical time spent in the office or on the farm. Work exceeds any limit assigned to working hours and mobilises the entire personality.

The subjective relationship to work

Work does not just serve the purpose of producing. It also helps us to live together and to build our identity. To work is to grow, to develop and to express our creativity, our intelligence, our sensitivity and our affectivity. The relationship to work is therefore not just technical or economic. It is also relational and identity-linked. It involves sentiments and the ‘subjective body’. The subjective body is not the body of the biologists. It is a second body, the one we live in, the one that feels affectively,

and the one that is also involved in the relationship with the other. The meaning given to work is therefore individual, multi-dimensional, and complex; it is the subjective relationship to work.

The dynamics of identity are based on the recognition of the work accomplished. This recognition is founded on two different judgements of the work done: the judgement of the utility of the work by those who benefit from it or those who order the work, and the aesthetic judgement of one's peers (work carried out according to a code of good practices).

Working is a source of pleasure and enhances subjectivity, particularly when: (1) the work was chosen by the worker and corresponds to his or her aspirations; (2) the worker is free to use his or her intelligence and sensitivity to adapt the content of work procedures or work organisation; (3) the work is considered to be complex and rewarding by the worker; (4) its value is recognised.

Characterising the individual subjective relationship to livestock farming

Characterising the subjective relationship to livestock farming was done in three stages. Using the bibliography (Dejours, *ibid.*; Porcher *ibid.*) and what the livestock farmers said, we first broke down the subjective relationship to work into five principle components, referred to as subjective rationalities: economic, relational, identity-linked, technical, related to the way to involve the body in work. Under real working conditions, these five subjective work rationalities form a whole: the subjective relationship to livestock work and to the other job. Second, for each subjective rationality, the diversity of the expressions was characterised. Third, the links made by every multi-job-holder farmer between subjective rationalities for farming and for his/her other job were identified.

Results

Contrasting economic rationalities

Economic rationality refers to the relationship built by the farmer between money and working. Every sheep farmer mentioned the economic rationality of livestock farming. We distinguished four categories: (1) sheep farming was expected to provide a principle or complementary income for the family; categories 2, 3 and 4 were characterised by the non-expectation of income for family needs; (2) livestock farming profits were entirely reinvested in the farm, considered to be an investment for the household; (3) livestock farming must be able to self-finance farm operation; off-farm income made it possible to invest in the farm; (4) off-farm income covered the family's needs and partially financed the day-to-day operation of the farm and investments.

Relational rationality: quality relationships

Relational rationality refers to the way relationships with people and animals influence the work organisation. During the interview, some of the sheep farmers went into great detail about what sheep farming gave them at the relational level, both with the animals and with other people, whereas others did not mention it or only in passing.

With the animals

For some farmers, sheep farming made it possible to establish relationships with the animals that were a source of pleasure, recognition and well-being.

These relationships allowed the farmers to positively invest their affectivity and sensitivity. By giving of themselves to the animals, receiving in return and giving back, they expressed the pleasure of being both responsible for and committed to the animals, as well as the pleasure of reciprocity. *"The animals give back what you give to them"*, said Robert. They loved and felt loved by the animals. *"I love it when the sheep come to me to be petted"*, said Frederic. The animals were like a family: *"We don't have any two-legged children but many with four legs"*, said Béatrice. These relationships also

provided the farmers with sensual pleasure and a special connection to life. For Jérôme, livestock farming “*makes life worthwhile*”; Elisabeth said, “*everyday we see animals being born*”; for Robert, livestock farming was “*helping life*”. Some livestock farmers said that working with animals relaxed them and gave them energy: “*Animals give you a change of scenery [...], a different outlook on life*”, for Marie-Françoise who works as a salesclerk in the family bakery. They appreciated these peaceful relationships, in contrast with the hierarchical relationships experienced in their other job, which are sometimes aggressive and disrespectful. “*Animals don’t say anything if you are late for work. It’s not important...*”, explained Marie-Françoise.

With people

The pleasure of working with “co-workers” of choice was emphasized: together as a family, with a spouse or with children. Livestock farming appeared as a time and space of shared pleasure, particularly with a spouse but also with other farmers at agricultural fairs, competitions and communal summer pastures. On the contrary, some farmers underscored the pleasure of working alone. The solidarity between sheep farmers was part of the pleasure of livestock farming for some farmers.

Identity rationality: Enhancing identity

Identity rationality refers to the relationship built by the farmer between identity and farming.

Some farmers considered livestock farming to be rewarding and enriching. Livestock farming positively contributed to their identity. This was particularly the case for farmers who considered their off-farm job to be uninteresting and who chose farming because they liked it (and not necessarily the other job). For some of them, their off-farm income allowed them to make their childhood dream of becoming a sheep farmer come true. These farmers emphasized the pleasure of doing a job where they could constantly learn and improve themselves, in contrast to some salaried jobs that provided no possibility of advancement: “*livestock farming is a job where we continue to learn everyday*”. For them, learning the profession was even more rewarding because it was recognised as being complex and gave them the opportunity to use their intelligence. They also mentioned the pleasure and satisfaction of being free to do as they wish, of feeling responsible for improving work organisation, work content and the procedure used, especially when it was impossible in their other job: “*I am free to do as I like; I am responsible for decisions and results*”, explained Georges. Finally they valued the recognition of the usefulness of their work by their customers (butchers, cooperatives, consumers), as well as by their spouses because they helped them bring their project to fruition. They also valued the aesthetic judgement of neighbouring farmers, of the spouse, and of the extension technician who attest to the quality of the work done and recognise their capacity of being good livestock farmers.

Livestock work also made it possible to fulfil one’s destiny by being part of a family history. By taking up livestock farming, some farmers wanted to contribute to maintaining a family “heritage”, going far beyond economic considerations. They wanted to ensure the continuity of raising animals, farming the land and preserving know-how: “*I wanted make sure that it wouldn’t be over*”, said Jérôme, the grandson of a farmer. Some farmers considered themselves as temporary bearers of a heritage between past and future generations. For André, being a farmer was, above all, “*a continuation, the continuation of [his] parents*” because he “*works and lives where [his] roots are*”.

Livestock farming was also considered as a means to be recognised as an important land-owner.

Technical rationality: the pleasure of efficiently managing the production process and work organisation

The technical rationality refers to the way the farmer wants to control the production process and work organisation efficiency and to the attention he gives to production and work organisation performances.

The technical rationality of work expressions was related to the performances in terms of production, animal behaviour-related capabilities, work organisation efficiency and working hours. They related little or not at all to equipment. The technical rationale of livestock work was not emphasized by all of the sheep farmers. One female sheep farmer even explicitly denied it.

Sheep farmers who spoke of their satisfaction in obtaining technical performances were particularly enthusiastic about the breed they raised. They especially liked working with animals with specific capabilities and having them express these capabilities via their performances. Two types of capabilities were emphasized: (1) production-related capabilities such as prolificacy, milk-producing capacity, conformation of lambs, etc.: *“a ewe that gives birth to two 40-kg lambs in 120 days, that’s great!”*, (2) behaviour-related capabilities like lambing ease, docility of the ewes, etc.

The technical rationale of work was also expressed with respect to work organisation efficiency. Some farmers expressed their pride in being able to hold two jobs, to organise themselves well, *“you have to be organised because you work during the week”*, to use their brains, *“you just have to think about it”*. If not, *“you learn at your own expense”*, said Robert who had worked on improving his system his whole life. He equipped his paddocks with water, avoiding daily water distribution, and proper gates that could be easily closed. He tried to *“spend as little time as possible”* on daily tasks.

The technical aspect of livestock farming work was also denied: *“Nitrogen or no nitrogen, I don’t even look! R3+, P, O¹, who cares!”*.

The “body-at-work” rationality

The body-at-work rationality refers to the search by the farmer for and to the feeling of physical well-being in working. Many farmers underlined the advantages of livestock farming in terms of physical well-being compared to their other job. For them, livestock farming was the opportunity to use their body differently in work in a positive way: outdoors instead of indoors, *“working in the field is different from being shut up all day”* (in a bakery or in a truck), at their own rhythm or schedule instead of those imposed by others, *“[Livestock farming] changes your way of life”*, working more physically or differently and in a less monotonous way than at a factory job. Georges said that livestock farming allowed him to *“stay in shape, not like [his] co-workers at the postal sorting centre”*.

On the contrary, some other farmers talked about the harder physical labour involved in livestock farming in comparison to their other job.

Analysis of the diversity of the cases

The subjective relationships to livestock work differed depending on: (1) the types of rationality emphasized and their relative place in the relationship to work. Some subjective relationships to work appeared to be dominated by two rationalities (identity-linked and technical, or identity-linked and relational), or by three rationalities (economic, identity-related and technical). Others appeared to be relatively ‘balanced’ over the five rationalities; (2) the way in which the rationalities were linked to each other; and (3) the links between the subjective relationship to livestock work and that of the other job.

¹ European assessment system of carcass quality, which consists of five conformation categories referred to as E, U, R, O and P, where E is the best quotation and P the worst. The number characterises the fat content and visual aspect of the carcass. There are four categories from 1 to 4. Note 1 corresponds to the leanest category and 4 to the fattest one.

We chose to represent the subjective relationship to work by the volume of a pyramid whose four summits correspond to the four economic, relational, identity-related and technical subjective rationalities. The body-at-work rationality is located at the centre of the pyramid since the subjective body is the core of the subjective relationship to work. For reasons of readability, the expressions of the component of the subjective body at work were placed outside of the pyramid and followed by an arrow that goes toward the centre of the pyramid. Circles express the main links made by the farmers between work rationalities. Reference to the other job was indicated as contrasted (\neq) or similar ($=$). We present four cases of multi-job-holder sheep farmers, which exemplify the diversity of coexisting subjective rationales of livestock farming work, their consistencies, tensions or contradictions.

Robert’s relationship to livestock work was characterised by Fig. 1: (1) the balanced presence of five types of rationalities; (2) the way in which Robert linked the economic and relational rationalities to livestock work by saying that “*loving animals brings in money*”, and the way in which he linked the technical, identity-related, economic and body-at-work rationalities by saying that “*you have to use your imagination to save time [and reduce stress] and labour, even if it costs a little more*”; (3) the fact that he wanted to make a living from both of his activities and liked to do things in his own way and organise his own time.

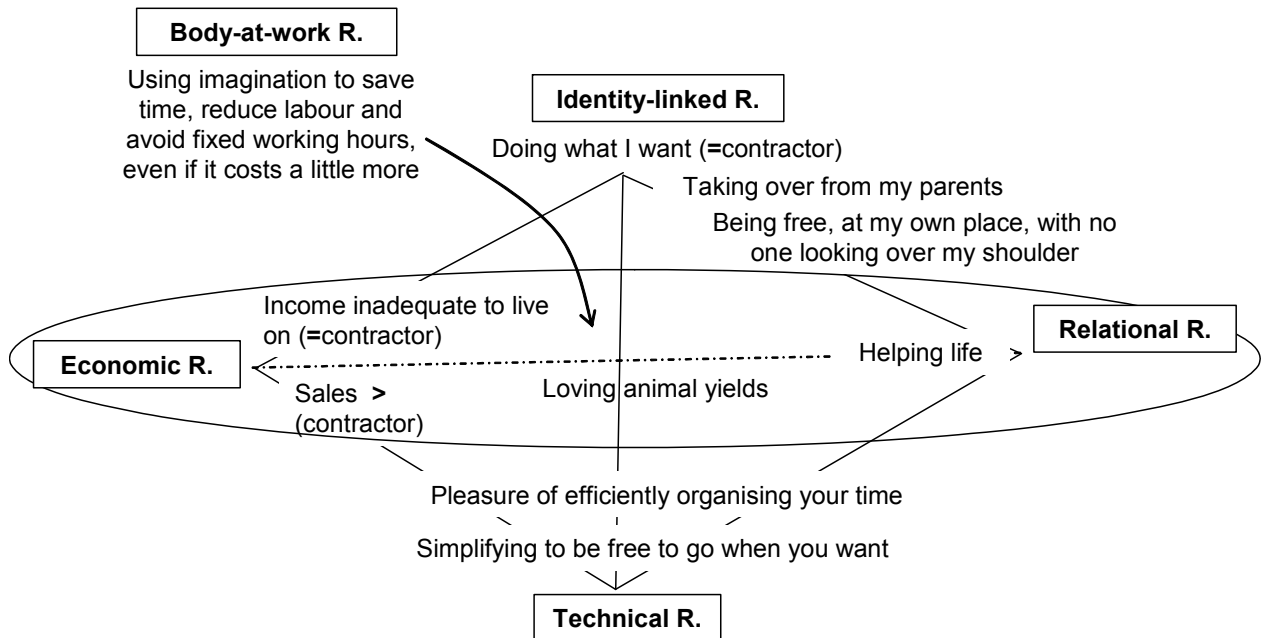


Figure 1. Robert, 340 sheep, independent road maintenance contractor.

Béatrice is Robert’s spouse. They farm together. They were interviewed separately. Her relationship to livestock work was characterised by Fig. 2: (1) the dominance of relational, identity-linked and the subjective body-at-work rationalities, the denial of the technical component and the impact of the economic component on Robert, her spouse, the farm manager; (2) the strong link between the identity-related and relational rationalities of livestock farming that Béatrice saw as being maternal, educational, nurturing, protective of the ewes and lambs, at her husband’s side; (3) her work at the supermarket provided her with an income and health insurance, whereas livestock farming satisfied her needs at the identity, relational, and body-at-work level, which her work at the supermarket did not.

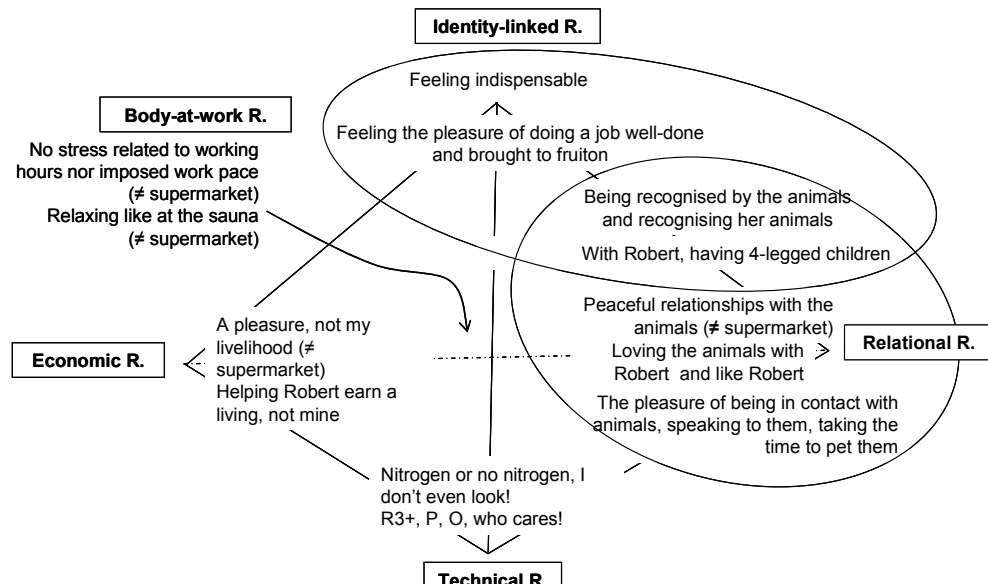


Figure 2. Béatrice, 340 sheep, works in a supermarket stocking shelves before the store opens.

Georges's relationship to livestock work was characterised by Fig. 3: (1) the dominance of identity-related and technical rationalities over the economic and relational rationalities; (2) the link between the identity-related and technical rationalities. GB wanted to be recognised as being capable of producing highly-rated lambs like a "real" farmer (i.e., full-time farmer), but had opinions about money, bonuses and farm work, which were different from the "real farmers" [of his village]; (3) Georges compared his breeding work that he considered to be "difficult but interesting", and which he described as "a plus in his life", to his work at the post office which he qualified as "uninteresting [but] that puts food on the table, and where he has "good friends".

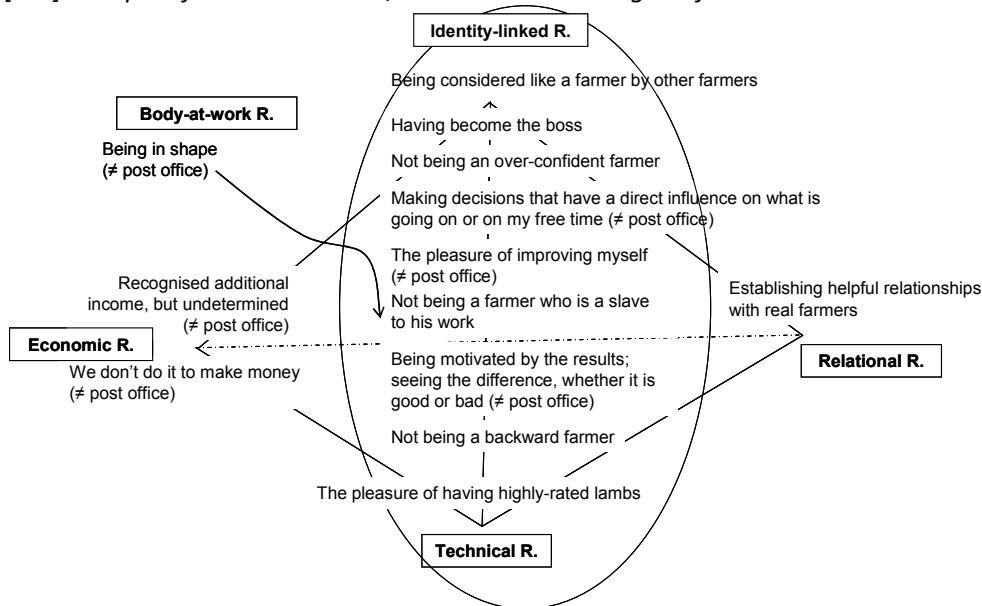


Figure 3. Georges, 265 sheep, works for the post office, sorting mail at night.

Gilbert's relationship to livestock work was characterised by Fig. 4: (1) the dominance of economic and identity-linked rationalities; (2) These two rationalities converged in the fact that livestock farming was a way to be an important landowner, to be one's own boss; (3) the economic and identity-linked rationalities were also dominant in the earth moving work but were expressed differently: earthwork easily and rapidly generated considerable income, whereas the farm was thought of as a capital whose long-term and hard-to-get benefits were used to pay back loans.

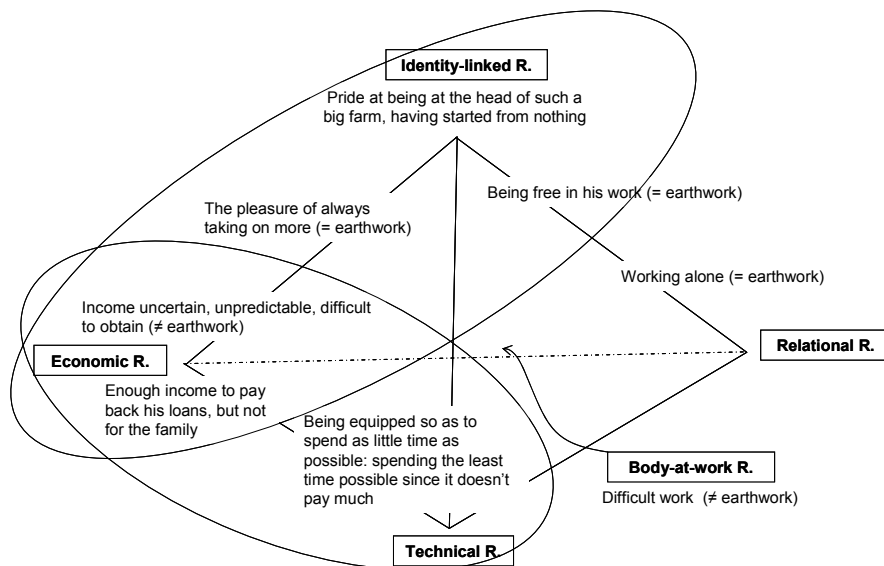


Figure 4. Gilbert, 563 sheep, independent earthworks contractor.

Discussion and conclusion

As other scientists have already shown for multi-job-holder farmers (Barlett, 1986; Bessant, 2000, 2006; Gasson, 1986), our analysis confirmed that all multi-job-holder farmers do not have the same expectations about farming. However, our analysis differed from existing analyses of multiple-job-holders' motivations (Barlett, 1986, 1991) and from analyses of the meaning of farm work, on the following three points. First, our analysis was based on the psychodynamics of work, which explicitly analyses the relationships between subjectivity, work organisation and the improvement of working conditions (Dejours, 2007). It therefore attributes importance to farmers' feelings and emotions about working, and not only to the meaning of work. Second, unlike typological approaches (for example, (Bessant, 2000; Mage, 1976)), our analysis framework did not define types based on a closed list of indicators that made it possible to classify multiple-job farmers. On the contrary, our analysis aimed at identifying the specific combinations of work rationality expressions so that tensions, contradictions and consistencies among work rationalities for each farmer and his or her spouse could be identified. This makes it possible to shed light on common points and differences in work rationalities between spouses or members of the labour force, resulting in conflicts or compromises about how to operate the farm and to organise the farm work. It therefore provides an in-depth view of what underlies the farmers' guidelines used to operate the farm and to organise the work, useful for advising individual farmers. Typological approaches identified more general motivations like preserving the lifestyle, progressively establishing a livestock activity or generating an additional income. They did not have the same operational goal. Indeed, the third difference is that the analysis of the subjective work rationalities was not a goal in itself but was thought to be part of a wider analysis framework that made it possible to globally analyse individual subjective work rationalities, work constraints as perceived by farmers and technical and organisational farm choices to improve working conditions. For example, the analysis of the work rationalities of Robert and Béatrice showed that Robert and Béatrice are not looking for more free time. They prefer working together rather than having free time by dividing up the workload. It also showed that it is important for them to take their time on the farm and to be able to spend time with the animals. The analysis shed light on the differences between Robert and Béatrice and their compromise: Béatrice denies the economic and the technical dimensions of work, whereas Robert wants to make money. Therefore, he is the one who decides to treat or to euthanise an animal. Aspects of farm operation that could be changed or not by improving work organisation were also underscored. Devoting a great deal of time together to birthing and to the lambs, bottle-feeding the lambs, culling their old

ewes without selling them and euthanizing suffering animals are some of the key points that could not be changed.

The five types of subjective work rationalities we proposed are not exhaustive. For example, work has also a moral dimension, which can be considered as a work rationality. Macombe (2007) showed that some farmers have a work ethic whereas others do not. She also showed that according to their work ethic, farmers accept a large amount of work, which would be considered as unacceptable without this work ethic. Other studies about organic farming also mentioned this. However, this moral work rationality did not explicitly appear in the interviews we made, perhaps due to how they were conducted. For example, we did not specifically encourage people to discuss what quality means to them, as Macombe did. We did not specify all the expressions for each rationality, just because it is impossible. The subjective relationship to work is very complex. The science of work psychodynamics would maintain that there are as many subjective work rationalities and expressions as workers and would not appreciate our simplification. Nevertheless, our proposition consists more in showing the diversity of coexisting subjective work rationalities, their synergies, tensions or contradictions, than in specifying each subjective work rationality.

Are this analysis framework and its application specific to multi-job-holder farmers? It is possible to think that the important role played by freedom, affectivity, sensitivity and personal values in what multi-job-holders say is specific to them due to the relative economic freedom provided by off-farm incomes to operate the farm. However, other studies of full-time pig and dairy farmers showed the important place of affectivity and feelings in farm work (Porcher, 2001). Salmona (1994; 1974) and Moneyron (2003) highlighted the role of affectivity and feelings in essential livestock farming know-how. We think that the important place for freedom, affectivity, sensitivity and personal values in farm operation decisions is not specific to multi-job-holder farmers but is just more obvious. Acknowledging it is one step; taking it explicitly into account in work organisation diagnosis methods is another. When Boissier (2006) and Kling (2008) reviewed the methods used by extension services to deal with work organisation, they concluded that more global approaches that link technical and human aspects are required in France. Published at the end of 2009, this review about work organisation diagnosis methods used in France by extension services on livestock farms describes 13 methods (Collectif, 2009). With the exception of one, these methods do not produce diagnoses linking objective and subjective factors of the work organisation. Our proposal consists of a way to listen to the possible mixed feelings and contradictory personal expectations of farmers about their different activities, and not of a set of indicators to be checked off. It is based on the question: what do farmers invest in each activity (for example, each agricultural production on a farm, or on-farm and off-farm activities) and what do they expect from it with respect to income, expressions of freedom, identity and intelligence enhancement, affectivity, physical well-being, etc.?

To conclude, is the improvement of liveability a relevant challenge to be addressed? The psychodynamics of work maintains that the challenge for policies to be addressed is to improve work organisation so as to provide working conditions that preserve mental health and that promise self-fulfilment (Dejours, 2007). We think that this would be a far more relevant and ambitious challenge for farmers' unions, farming extension services and agricultural scientists than promoting liveability or good working conditions considered as acceptable working time and the possibility of having free-time.

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