

## **The work coordinators do**

An organisational reflection on the coordination function  
as enactive of change in complex policy fields

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### **ABSTRACT**

In this paper, we reflect on the work of coordinators in the fields of mental healthcare and internment. We examine the contribution of this new type of workers to the implementing of policy plans targeting complex social problems, such as the issue of mental health care fragmentation.

We outline a theoretical and methodological framework appropriate to the study of coordination in action, before describing the coordinators' working environment, concrete coordination practices and the occasions in which they are visible.

Based on this empirical description, we argue that the coordinator work begin more with ignorance than with knowledge and that coordinators do not know precisely who they are, as coordinators, both individually and collectively. Neither do they know exactly what to do. The coordinators' world is nevertheless full of knowledge: there are plenty of experts claiming diverging interpretations of the complex problems addressed by the coordinators. Therefore, we ask how the coordinators deal with their ignorance in such an ambiguous world, that is, a world characterised by both an abundance of knowledge and a scarcity of resources.

We show that postulating the coordinators ignorance helps to see what is the core of their function and how they perform their work, that is, by attending and scheduling meetings where previously separated and incommensurable events are linked together.

### **KEYWORDS**

Coordination work, knowledge, enactment, policy change, sensemaking

## ***INTRODUCTION***

This paper reflects on the work of coordinators in the mental healthcare and forensic fields. It describes the coordinators' working environment, concrete coordination actions and the occasions in which they are visible. Coordinators can be presented as boundary actors who are responsible for bringing policy ideas and scattered professional expertise and experiences together. Policy makers made them responsible for stimulating change in professional practices by creating new work procedures and inter-organisational arrangements.

We argue that the coordinator's work begins more with ignorance than with knowledge: there is ignorance because of blurry policy plans, blurry directives regarding their missions and the vast heterogeneity of the field reality. Coordinators do not know precisely who they are, as coordinators, both individually and collectively. Neither do they know exactly what to do – because their tasks are ill-defined – and how to do that – because their resources are uncertain.

The coordinators' world is nevertheless full of knowledge. There is plenty of people knowing what they want and as much document telling how to do that. This knowledge is of different types and forms: it is based on professional expertise as well as personal experience; it is embodied by multiple types of actors as hospital managers, policy makers, health professionals and service users; it is inscribed in policy and organisational documents; and enacted through meetings, conferences and daily conversations. The coordinators' mandate consists precisely of drawing connections between these scattered pieces of knowledge and vague policy ideas and translating them into a consistent project. Then, we can wonder how coordinators learn to do this articulation work and how they perform it day to day. The coordinators' world is also a rapidly changing world where resources are lacking or at least uncertain. Coordination activities are developing in complex policy fields under pressure to achieve more efficient ways of working. In these fields, resources are scarce and their distribution depends on political negotiations. In this sense, the coordinator's work often depends on someone else's decisions and negotiations taking place somewhere else, sometimes over a long period of time.

Therefore, we are going to ask how the coordinators are dealing with ignorance in such an ambiguous world, that is, a world characterised by both an abundance of knowledge and a scarcity of resources. We will show that postulating the coordinators' ignorance, rather than focusing on the profusion and rapid circulation of knowledge, enables to go beyond misleading assumptions underlying the abstract as well as political conception of the coordination function. By shifting attention from the coordinators' *professional problems*, which we will define as the translation of knowledge across professional boundaries, to the coordinators' *practical problem* – their ignorance, we will tend toward a definition of the coordinators' concrete work. We will argue for this move into the coordinator's daily experience of their work by relying on empirical but also theoretical and methodological considerations.

In the first section of this paper we attempt to provide a theoretically grounded definition of the coordination work by positioning it in the literature on boundary spanners, middle managers and knowledge brokers. We point out several questions raised by this literature review before considering how the concept of “enactment” might help us to address those questions. In doing so, we draw on two different perspectives using the idea of enactment, that is, the work of Karl Weick on sensemaking in organisations and the phenomenological approach to knowledge in policy.

The second section briefly introduces the two researches from which this reflection on the coordinators’ work has originated. These researches have been focusing, respectively, on the implementation of mental healthcare networks (2010-2015) and the creation of care trajectories for MIO’s (2016-2019). It then exposes our methodological frame that combines document analysis, interviews with coordinators and other stakeholders of the mental health and forensic sectors, as well as observations of meetings. This kind of methodological triangulation is, we argue, required to understand the coordination work comprehensively.

The third empirical section starts by outlining the coordinators’ work context and explaining the main characteristics of the policy problems dealt with by the coordinators, how policy makers framed their intervention, and the key aspects of the policy initiative in the framework of which they are working. The questions of ‘*what do the coordinators do*’ and ‘*how do the coordinators perform their work*’ are then examined based on our empirical material.

The conclusive discussion will draw on the empirically-grounded definition of the coordinators work outlined as a result of the empirical section. Based on this definition, we reconsider the coordinators professional problems, mandate and knowledge. This reflection on the coordination knowledge will, in turn, open a reflection on the form of policy-relevant knowledge in very ambiguous, uncertain and conflicting contexts as the coordinators’ world. We will stress that, insofar as we accept that coordinators actually do not know, we come to see the centrality of enacted knowledge, compared to knowledge inscribed in documents or embodied by people, to policy process.

## **1. TOWARD A THEORETICAL DEFINITION OF THE COORDINATION WORK**

Scientific literature<sup>1</sup> defines care coordinators as a particular type of boundary spanners within collaborative health and social settings (Williams 2011). Boundary spanners include individuals who

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<sup>1</sup> Asking the questions ‘who are the coordinators’ and “what do they do” led us to search for scientific literature on this type or comparable type of actors. Given the scope of our empirical research – two policy plans supposing inter-organisational change in the fields of justice and health care - we concentrated on scientific literature considering the role of specific actors dedicated to support change in public sector organisations.

are explicitly responsible for connecting together several entities previously separated by a boundary (Kislov et al. 2017). Considered in the public service, boundary-spanning has developed in response to complex issues defying organisational, professional and sectoral boundaries. It involves collaborative working, better services integration and efficient utilisation of scarce resources (Williams 2002).

The context wherein boundary spanning occurs is generally defined as uncertain, ambiguous and often conflicting (Kislov et al. 2017; Williams 2002; Marrone 2010). It is characterised by the co-presence of diverse cultures, beliefs, interests and rigid institutional frameworks. Human, material, and financial resources at the disposal of boundary spanners are most of time lacking or at least uncertain (idem 2002; 2011). More specifically, the context of healthcare is described as particularly challenging for those trying to work collaboratively, by cutting across conventional boundaries (White 2012). Healthcare organisations are indeed structured according to the model of professional bureaucracy (Mintzberg 1979), which is characterised by strong separations between specialised domains of expertise or jurisdictions (Abbott 1988). Attempts to cut across these separations are often interpreted as jurisdictional assaults, or attempts to take over a profession's knowledge, work activities and clientele. Therefore, they bring about discussions, conflicts, and negotiations between those controlling the targeted jurisdictions and those responsible for boundary spanning. The boundary spanners' role thus seems challenging and requiring specific abilities in supporting complex change processes.

According to William (2011), boundary spanners cope with their mission in four interrelated ways. First, they develop, manage and sustain networks of relationships – they are reticulists. Second, they make things happen by being creative and opportunist – they are entrepreneurs. Third, they manage relationships through appropriate communication, by fostering trust, listening, understanding and translating between different professional languages – they are cultural brokers. Fourth, boundary spanners manage the development and maintenance of collaborative devices – they are housekeepers.

Transversal to these roles of boundary spanners is the idea of bridging or relating previously separated or disconnected things together: the agenda of this policymaker with the one of that expert, a technological innovation with a clinical need, an institutional strategy with a political programme, professional interests and cultures with organisational ones, and so on. The activities through which apparently incommensurable things, events, actors and knowledge are brought together often requires knowledge brokering, that is, transferring one particular way of knowing about a specific situation from one context to another.

The notion of knowledge brokering has been frequently used to describe the work of care coordinator (Meyer 2010) either within organisations (internal brokering) or between different organisations or arenas as the political and professional ones (external brokering) (White 2012). Four aspects of knowledge brokering seem particularly relevant to understand the coordinators' work.

First, brokering concerns not only scientific evidence, expertise and technologies but also practices, experiences, culture and ideologies (White 2012). To put it the other way around, it can focus on all the ways people are thinking of, talking about and acting on the situations they meet every days. Annual reports, clinical guidelines, medical diagnosis, organisational charts, meeting proceedings and policy briefs are all examples of means used for ordering, categorising and thus knowing and sharing about everyday experiences.

Second, brokering knowledge implies transferring it from one context to another. The contexts between which knowledge is transferred have distinctive and differing characteristics including, for instance, different legal frameworks, organisational routines and ideologies. These characteristics are either facilitating or hindering the knowledge transfer, but they always require adaptations in the knowledge to be transferred.

Third, knowledge transfer equally means knowledge transformation (Freeman & Sturdy 2014). Knowledge can indeed changes of form by being inscribed in document, materialised through instruments, enacted in social situation, verbally expressed or embodied through experiences. Transformation can help knowledge transfer by making it more visible, accessible and understandable to different types of audiences. For example, transcribing a conference talk in proceedings makes it accessible and then transferable to people all over the world.

Fourth, if successfully realised, knowledge brokering includes translation (R Freeman 2002; Freeman 2009) or modification in both the thing to be transferred and the context in which it is transferred. Those modifications concern the content of knowledge as well as the role and relationships of those using knowledge. Medical electronic records provide a good example of a technology changing not only the amount and type of data that can be transferred but the relationship between all those involved in the data sharing (Richard Freeman 2002). Its implementation is considered successful only if it supports the patient empowerment and increased professional accountability as much as the rapid circulation of medical data between care providers.

Knowledge brokering thus appears as a skilful activity requiring abilities to read complex organisations and fields of action and to communicate experts and lay knowledge across different audiences. But it also appears as a very social activity inducing several encounters, conversations and negotiations with multiple stakeholders seeking to agree on a common definition of the situation and their respective role in dealing with it. The boundary spanners are at the heart of these negotiations. The care co-ordinators are, in particular, responsible for initiating and managing knowledge translation between and within the political and professional arenas.

The coordinators' resources in realising this translation work are very uncertain but also paradoxical. As previously mentioned, boundary spanning activities often occurs in ambiguous situations where problems are ill-defined and resources are lacking. Moreover, in a way comparable to middle managers,

coordinators occupy intermediary positions which constitute both resources and obstacles in circulating new ideas in organisations across old boundaries (Radaelli & Sitton-Kent 2016; Pichault & Schoenaers 2012).

As Radaelli and Sitton (2016) put it, their distinctive feature is to be “at once controller, controlled, resister and resisted” (p.312). Occupying this particular position can turn out to be an obstacle since coordinators cannot “fully rely on hierarchical position, resource control or expert knowledge to legitimise their involvement” (Radaelli & Sitton-Kent 2016, p.319). Meanwhile, being positioned between top managers and executives enables coordinators to access to a wider range of knowledge than workers occupying higher or lower position and to mobilise alternative sources of power such as pre-existing relationships in the organisation and their “ancillary role”, which would help them building trust.

The mobilisation of alternative sources of power is seen as particularly important since intermediate actors as coordinators cannot act autonomously. Instead, they are always seeking to recruit allies, build coalitions and secure the participation of large networks of actors supporting the translation processes over a certain period of time. Those networks are enrolled mainly through meetings which are as much used for developing shared meaning with allies as for negotiating acceptable goals with opponents. The coordinators’ intermediary position, meaning that they are not associated to particular professional ideologies or managerial strategies, would also facilitate their work on “translated ideas”.

A theoretical and preliminary definition of the coordinators’ work can be drawn from this brief literature review.

Coordinators are boundary spanners since their core objective is to develop and stabilise collaborative device cutting across organisational, professional and sectorial boundaries. The first step in achieving that objective consist in connecting previously separated and most of time different types and forms of knowledge together, or knowledge brokering. This implies not only transferring (adapting) but also *transforming* and translating (reciprocal adaptations concerning both the definition and division of work) knowledge between different contexts. That knowledge work is performed in a very ambiguous environment characterised by the existence of ill-defined problems, the scarcity of human and material resources and the presence of conflicting interests and expertise. The main resources of coordinators are thus found in their intermediary position. By emphasising their axiological and relational neutrality, their position would help them to secure networks of allies and promoting their definition of the situation. The work on ideas would be crucial to a successful translation and would be mainly performed through meeting. The coordinators’ neutral position could nevertheless turn into an obstacle since they cannot rely either on a hierarchical position or a professional status to justify their action. An inescapable paradox – the fact that the coordinators’ axiological and relational neutrality is both their main advantage and weakness – would thus be at the core of the coordinators work. Since any specific training or formal

status would go against the coordinators' neutrality and flexibility, only personal characteristics and trajectories could help them in coping with that paradoxical situation.

This definition provides an abstract definition of what the coordinators do without paying a great attention to the questions of how they do that and in which occasions. The knowledge work, inducing transfer, transformation and translation- is described as crucial to the building of collaborative device spanning conventional boundaries. And it would essentially be performed through meetings. But what happens through meetings that explain their contribution to the knowledge work? And how do this knowledge work brings about and feeds in collaborative devices?

But more importantly, this definition avoid asking how, in the absence of any stable work environment, specific training and professional status, the coordinators come to know how to achieve their objectives and using the paradoxical resources they have at their disposal.

## **2. THE COORDINATION WORK: ENACTED AND ENACTIVE**

We suggest addressing the questions of how coordinators perform their work and deal with their paradoxical situation by relying on the concept of enactment, conceived as a characteristic of the social and ongoing process through which people make sense of ambiguous situations. This concept has its roots in the sociology of organisations and has been particularly emphasised by Karl Weick in his work on sensemaking in organisations (Weick 2015; Weick 1995). The idea of enactment has nevertheless also been highlighted in other types of researches, which focus on different issues than organising but share Weick processual ontology.

In this paper, while examining the coordinators' performance of their work as a sensemaking process, we emphasise Freeman and Sturdy' use of "enacted knowledge" in their book on knowledge in policy (Freeman & Sturdy 2014). In this work, they presented enacted knowledge as part of a scheme designed to examine the production, use and circulation of knowledge through policy processes. This scheme distinguishes between three forms of knowledge corresponding to different but not necessarily successive phases of its transformation. These forms are defined as inscribed, embodied and enacted knowledge. The underlying ideas of this scheme is that the form of knowledge largely determines the extent to which knowledge moves and the role it plays in the policy world.

The properties of each form of knowledge can be emphasised by presenting the different aspects of Weick' sensemaking. In this way, we will be able to figure out how the different forms of knowledge can be mobilised, transformed and articulated through concrete coordination experience occurring under particular circumstances, which are comparable to those faced by the coordinators. Following Weick, sensemaking is indeed particularly observable when people are faced with situations whose solution is neither obvious nor routinised. This type of situation, which Weick described as ambiguous, are

discrepant events that people have to explain before being able to pursue a course of action (Weick 1995, pp.4–5). Other defining features of ambiguous situations are an uncertain environment with lacking resources and complex problems whose nature is changing and solutions are unknown or contested (idem, p.93).

Individuals trying to deal with such ill-structured situations draw from different sources of inspirations which are gradually articulated through a process combining action and reflexion. Sensemaking is first grounded in identity construction. This means that, when faced with a puzzling situation, individuals try to make sense of it by relying on their personal experiences. More diverse experiences thus means more sources of inspiration that can be accommodated to fit in with the situation: “the more selves I have access to, the more meanings I should be able to extract and impose in any situation” (idem, p.24). Embodied knowledge, which is defined as “knowledge held by human beings and used and expressed by them as they go about their activities in the world” (Freeman & Sturdy 2014), would therefore be relevant to understand the relative ease with which the coordinators perform their work. Moreover, insofar as we raise the question of the formalisation of the coordinators’ work, it draws attention to the fact that “embodied knowledge is only mobile to the extent that human bodies are mobile” (idem). It can be used tacitly or expressed verbally through any kind of human activity but it remains very personal, in the sense of being inseparable from those holding it.

A second source of inspiration would be found in the coordinators’ environment. According to Weick, individuals seeking for means to orient their action rely on “extracted cues” which are “simple and familiar structure” from which they derive a sense of what is happening. Such cues can be found in existing social roles, regulations and institutions (Weick 1995). To take a simple example in relation to coordination, we will see that, in their attempt to make sense of their function, the coordinators often refer to the formal description provided by policymakers. This description provides them with a common point of reference. In this respect, Weick’ extracted cues share important properties of inscribed knowledge. Just as knowledge inscribed on documents or other type of material supports, it refers to visible and stable elements that can be used independently from their context of production, and this for a certain period of time. While embodied knowledge make coordination performance more singular, inscribed knowledge would thus increase their homogeneity and stability over time.

However, neither the coordinators’ experience nor extracted cues are sufficient to understand how coordinators make sense of their function. Concerning the coordinators’ experience, we must keep in mind that the very activity of making sense of an ongoing and puzzling situation rapidly turn into a new experience on which one can draw in order to make sense of further ambiguous situations: “every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some ways the quality of those which come after” (Dewey, J. cited in Weick 2015). It is thus the transformation of embodied knowledge, or the continuity of the coordination experience, which appears relevant to understand how coordinators learn about their work. This idea of continuous transformation also applies

to the extracted cues which constitute, in Weick' terms, only the beginning of a sentence. Just as the beginning of a sentence does not entirely determine the meaning of the whole sentence, the formal description of coordination does not enable to predict how the coordination work is performed. Instead, it is growing from every talks and actions by which the coordinators specify, qualify and criticise its formal description. To put it the other way around, knowledge of the coordination work exists mainly in its enacted form.

This has important implications regarding the possibility to know about the coordination work and to formalise its contribution to policy process. Indeed, as Freeman and Sturdy put it, enacted knowledge is the most social, uncertain and volatile form of knowledge. It is social and uncertain since, just as Weick sensemaking, it grows out of human interactions. In the case of, for example, a meeting discussion, the coordinators' performance takes shape gradually and in a largely unpredictable way, following successive interventions, reactions and alignment of the participants. It is not only influenced by the meeting participants' speeches but also by "imagined others" as the policy makers who entrusted them with their mission of coordination. It follows that which sense of coordination is enacted through social situation is only one plausible version of what coordination could be. It is not an ideal performance of coordination, but the best performance of coordination that a particular coordinator has been able to achieve under particular circumstances.

Enacted knowledge is, moreover, very ephemeral or ongoing. As Weick put it, "people are always in the middle of things". This means that, at the very moment when coordinators are experiencing a certain sense of what coordination is, it is already undergoing some transformations. Enacted knowledge would not endure longer than the enactment itself. This makes this form of knowledge apparently difficult to grasp and to mobilise in both scientific reflection on coordination and political process partly dependent on coordination.

Enacted knowledge of coordination would thus be plausible and elusive at the same time. But does this mean that it does not matter in the construction of the coordination work and that it is useless to policy processes? In the remaining of this paper, by relying on Weick that a collective sense of complex situation is not only enacted but also "enactive of sensible environment", we will attempt to demonstrate how every reflexion, talk and action taken by the coordinators contribute to the reshaping of their environment. We will consider which sources of inspiration are mobilised in the sensemaking process as well as the extent to which enacted knowledge of coordination needed to be inscribed on documents or other material supports in order to influence further coordination actions.

### **3. METHODS**

Our interest in the coordinators' work originated from overlapping researches on different policy plans launched by the Belgian federal government in the field of healthcare. These plans include a reform of

mental healthcare organisation (Thunus & Schoenaers 2012; Thunus 2015), the diffusion of digital medical records in ambulatory and hospital care (Slomian 2017), the promotion of integrated care for people with chronic diseases and the development of individualised care trajectories for mentally-ill offenders (MIOs). This paper specifically draws on two researches respectively focusing on the reform of mental healthcare organisation (Reform 107) and the creation of care trajectories for MIOs. Our intention is not, however, to show the specificity of the coordination work in either kind of project. Instead, we intend to evidence coordination practices and work conditions applying to the function of coordination in the context of reorganising care trajectories and networks for both mentally ill and mentally ill offenders. Indeed, despite differences regarding the political context and the time when the two projects have started, they are part of the same policy strategy.

### *Two policy plans but the same strategy*

Mental healthcare network (MHN) and MIOs projects have been launched at different time, respectively in 2010 and 2012, in the framework of two different policy plans. The central aspects of each policy plan can be summarised as follows.

“Reform 107” was launched in May 2010. It intends to shift the Belgian mental healthcare organisation from a hospital-based care model to a community-based model. It started by an exploratory phase, from 2010 to 2015, during which field professionals have been asked to develop local projects directed to test the new model of care at the local level and to build the basis for inter-organisational mental healthcare networks. The new model is defined as community-based, centred on the service users’ needs, and comprehends five care functions including: mental health prevention and promotion, mobile psychiatric teams for acute and chronic diseases, rehabilitation facilities, intensive psychiatric treatments as well as alternative residential facilities. Existing psychiatric (residential) and mental health (community) services had to reorganise themselves in a way to fulfil these five functions through collaborative networks. This local reorganisation is led by the so-called networks coordinators. One local coordinator is appointed for each of the 19 projects ongoing all over the country. We are going to specify their formal mandate later on in this paper.

Care Trajectories (CT) for MIOs: the reform of health care for MIOs truly began in 2012 with the arrival of so-called ‘justice/health coordinators’ and mobile teams. Other funding had already been released for this public in the 2000s under the form of medium-risk projects and then multiannual plans. The objective is to bring the MIOs out of the psychiatric annexes of prisons to offer them an adapted and individualised care with the aim of a reintegration in the society. The funding were used to strengthen and diversify the offer of care in mental health at the same time in residential and in ambulatory, with the aim of creating "trajectories of care". Ultimately, this care offer should be integrated within the mental healthcare networks created by the Reform 107. The geographical cutting of implementation of the reform corresponds to the Belgian Courts of Appeal. To ensure a good implementation and the

achievement of the objectives of the reform, two coordinators have been hired in each Court of Appeal, one by the health sector and one by the justice sector. A masterplan globally describing the philosophy of the reform and the global articulation of the main objectives has been published in 2016.

Despite their specific objectives, these two plans have been issued by the federal public health minister and their conception and implementation is managed by the Federal public health department<sup>2</sup>. The political will that the MIOs projects develop in close connection with the MHN projects is explicitly stated in different policy documents.

The policy objectives and implementation strategy prevailing to both policy plans are largely comparable. As we will see further on, both plans give a central position to the coordinators and share two specific features that we will call “globalism” and “experientialism”. The political context, which changed a lot between the start of the mental health and the MIO’s project, is actually the only noticeable difference relevant to the understanding of the coordinators’ experience of their work. As set out in the empirical section, the main consequence of this changing political context is the level of uncertainty bearing on the coordinators work.

#### *Understanding the coordinators work through documents, discourses and practices*

This paper combines different methods of data collection including document analysis, interviews and observations. We suggest that this methodological triangulation is required to understand coordination in a comprehensive way, by considering how objective representations and subjective experiences of coordination combine in the construction of the coordinators’ work.

##### 1. Documents analysis

Documents provide *formal representation* of coordination. They are key resources for understanding the coordination work, and this for two reasons. First, *documents are the only tangible basis or frame for understanding the coordination work*. The role played by policy documents in framing coordination is comparable to the role played by the formal structure of organisations. Just as organisational structure, documents never fully determine whatever action is taken in response to them. Instead, as we will emphasise later, policy documents are most of time vague and require an interpretation. They are nevertheless important since they constitute the only common reference for those performing the coordination work: what is inscribed in documents about coordination is what they are all supposed to know when entering the function.

Second, *documents are also the only tangible output of the coordination work*. Although they represent only a very small part of what coordinators actually do, such as scheduling, chairing and attending

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<sup>2</sup> Federal Public Service for Health, Food chain safety and Environment.

meetings, documents circulate a representation of the coordinators' work in their environment. Meeting minutes, for example, make only some aspects of the coordinators' (inter-)actions visible to the other stakeholders. They nevertheless convey a particular meaning and made the coordinator responsible for this meaning to many other people. The way coordinators compose their document, by purposefully highlighting or avoiding mentioning some aspects of coordination actions, thus informs us about how they perform their work and redefine a situation.

In both cases, when they are conceived as the only tangible basis and output of the coordination work, *the meaning of document is inseparable from their production and interpretation through coordination actions*. We thus assume that understanding the coordination work suppose relating the content of documents (what they say) through the actions and interactions through which coordinators give sense to and make sense of them.

The two types of coordination actions considered in this paper are the coordinators talking about their work, which have been collected through interviews, and their interventions in meeting discussions (nonparticipant observation). The types of documents we analysed for both researches include policy, institutional and administrative documents such as policy programs and legal frameworks; and organisational documents including, mainly, the local network agreements achieved by coordinators, their projects description and annual activity reports.

## 2. Interviews

We used semi-structured interviews to collect the coordinators and other stakeholders' *discourse on coordination*. In the methodological scheme put forward in this paper, discourse is not viewed as a rational account through which interviewees provide the interviewer with an accurate description of something that he or she would know – we assume that coordinators do not know. Neither is it viewed as a professional rhetoric used by coordinators to bring about a particular representation of their work. Instead, the coordinators' and other stakeholders' discourse is conceived as one of the main way through which they make sense of the coordination work.

It follows that interviews with coordinators themselves are a way to see how they enact their work when trying to express it in words. Interviews with other stakeholders enable to attend to the formation of their perception of coordination: what they expected from coordinators, how they conceive their position and assess their action. As we will clearly see in the empirical part, just as the coordinators, the stakeholders enact a particular version of coordination through verbal expression. In Weick' words, they come to know what they think of coordination by trying to explaining us what it is. The way coordinators feel to be perceived by the other stakeholders is, in turn, an integral part of how they make sense of their work. Interviewing coordinators and those working with them is, consequently, both an *observation of* and a *contribution to* the gradual formation of the coordination work.

The types of interviews used in this paper are specified in the following tables. Extracts of some of these interviews are used in the empirical section. They have been purposely selected according to their representativeness of the coordinators’ and stakeholders’ discourse and their relevance to illustrate the processual and social aspects of the formation of the coordination work.

<b>Classification of interviewees according to their role into the R107 and MIOs care trajectories implementation</b>	<b>R107 From 2010 to 2017</b>	<b>CT MIOs From 2016 to 2017</b>
Policy makers and Coordinators responsible for supervising policy implementation	N = 13	N = 4
Coordinators responsible for loco-regional implementation	N = 13	N = 12
Coordinators responsible for psychiatric mobile teams	N = 5	N = 4
Field actors including Justice/Health professional and psychiatric hospitals managers	N = 13	N = 18

### 3. Observations

We used direct and nonparticipant observation to see *coordination in action*, that is, how the coordinators enact their work through concrete situations. As exposed in the table below, the concrete situations of coordination to which we refer in this paper are different types of meetings.

By relying on meeting observations we intend to show of coordinators concretely and collectively deal with the complex situation they face. More precisely, we first aim at answering the question of what they do through meetings: are they circulating information, building agreements, enforcing or creating a new definition of complex problems? Second, we intend to show how they do that. For example, do they enforce a particular definition of the situation by relying on their status of coordinators, or through references to previous events, to other types of actors or documents?

By looking at these aspects of the coordinators work, we pay a particular attention to the meeting participants’ interventions, to see how they contribute to the formation of the coordinators’ work. This social and situated contribution to the coordinators’ work is unpredictable before the coordinator enters the meeting room and come to know who is there and what is going to be said. In this respect, we must stress that most coordination actions are necessarily improvisations: they occur in response to (at least partly) unexpected interventions.

Each of these improvisations, however, constitutes an experience of coordination feeding in further improvisations. To put it differently, every coordination action is enacting the coordination function. The observation of meetings is thus a means to collect successive improvisations and to see how they gradually give shape to a global performance of coordination.

<b>Types of meetings</b>	<b>R 107 From 2010 to 2017</b>	<b>CT MIOs From 2016 to 2017</b>
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Policy and strategic meeting: meeting between policy makers, public health authorities and local coordinators	N = 3	N = 6
Network or steering committee meetings: meeting between managers of mental healthcare services and institutions	N = 16	N = 6
Working committee meetings: meeting between frontline professionals	N = 27	N = 0

#### 4. WHAT DO THE COORDINATORS DO?

In the introduction we stated that coordinators do not know who they are, as coordinators, neither what they have to do and how to do that. Based on interviews with coordinators and other stakeholders from both the mental health and forensic fields, we will start this section by highlighting and specifying the great ambiguity characterizing the coordinators work environment. We will also show that the coordination is an abstraction whose definition is ambiguous: nobody knows what coordination concretely means. Then, in order to give some substance to this abstract function, we are going to discuss the different characteristics associated to the function of coordination by going through the stakeholders' representations. In the last part of this section, by relying on our interviews and observations, we will try to elucidate concrete coordination practices.

##### *The coordination work context: novelty and ambiguity*

Coordination is a novelty and is widespread: within the mental health sector as well as more generally, stakeholders point out the appearance of new types of professionals as coordinators. Those ones are appearing in a context of reform to face the implementation of policy plans in complex environments:

“There is new kinds of jobs which appeared with the reform, like coordinators... It is the same thing for the 107 network coordinators, it appeared like that. Coordination, more and more. There are lots of novelties. And, moreover, all this coordination of devices, it is very complicated.” (Coordinator of a mobile team)

Those coordinators are of different types and sorts, and they are appearing at various levels of action. When looking at the forensic and mental health fields, this proliferation is striking: there are federal coordinators, coordinators of networks at the inter-organisational level and coordinators within organisations: « And about the coordinators, but which coordinators are we talking about? Justice one's? Public Health one's? We also have coordinators within the hospital itself. It is getting out of hand, getting a little messy.” (Chief of a psychiatric hospital service)

This new and widespread function is most of the time associated to policy initiatives aiming to face complex problems as, for instance, care fragmentation and segmentation, prisons' psychiatric wards overcrowding, institutionalisation of psychiatric patients, overspecialisation of mental healthcare, and

so on. They are described as complex insofar as they have different and interrelated dimensions: for example, care fragmentation has organisational, professional and clinical dimensions at the same time. These dimensions are interrelated, meaning that one problem's dimensions cannot be treated without addressing all its other dimensions simultaneously. To face those complex problems, policymakers set up global and experimental policies: only global policy objectives are set out and it is assumed that the way in which the policy programme is to be implemented is not known. The translation of those global and experimental policies within the empirical reality is inevitable:

“It is not a reform where the government stated: ‘you have to do that’. Rather, we built a model and local actors are going to test that model, to check whether it works in the same way in [city X] or [Y]; and it is not going to work in the same way: to be able to plan, program and finance mental health care by relying on a new model we have to know about local needs.” (Interview with the Director of the Psychosocial Department, FPS PH, 2013/02)

The implementation process of those new policies is managed by the Coordinators: their mandate consist in managing the development of local projects by bridging local actors' interests with policy objectives.

The question of how to address their complex problem is answered differently by multiple stakeholders and knowledge producers (such as knowledge centres, universities, advisory bodies and professional federations). The world in which coordinators implement one reform is therefore a world full of knowledge and they have to learn how to gather and disseminate information: “It is a job where you have to communicate very efficiently, because we are in a world where information is everywhere and you have to give neither too much nor too few information to the partners.” (Interview with the manager of a community mental health service, 20.2.2012).

In spite of all this knowledge, the context in which coordination is taking place is highly characterised by uncertainty, meaning that the coordinator ignores how things are going to take place in the future. The financing are not very important, almost non-existent for certain networks, and the implication of organisations and people can only be partial since their priority stays the organisational objectives. Even when the resources are more significant, the distribution and the availability of those are uncertain and is depending on the political arena. Moreover, it is almost impossible for coordinators to make sure of this distribution over a long period of time: in our case, the collaboration agreements are renewed yearly. Coordinators are highly depending on political negotiations and decisions which are most of the time happening at another level of action and on which they have no control. It usually happens for coordinators that the policy plan or the project they implement is stopped or overnight revised and modified: “We have been working for two years now, our teams are over motivated, but our project is still not allowed to start!” (Intervention of coordinator 1, local meeting, 9.2.2012) Another coordination says: “I am very uncomfortable with you because I am coming to tell you ‘follow me, we are going to create a network, but do not come immediately (because my project is still not allowed to start).” (Idem,

8.2.2012) This uncertainty and scarcity of resources is often perceived as an important hindering factor for coordinators who have to gather stakeholders and motivate them while saying to them that nothing is sure yet.

*The function of coordination: a contested definition*

Next to this uncertainty, we will see how the definition of the function of coordination is quite ambiguous. The responsibility for dealing with the resulting uncertainty falls to the coordinators. Indeed, faced with competing claims to reorganise mental healthcare and care trajectories for MIOs in a way rather than another, policy makers made the decision to define only a global philosophy and general orientation, without specifying how to translate them into concrete practices. In policymakers' and some stakeholders' opinion, coordination is central to policy. It is through coordinators that information and requests are translated from the policy level to the local level and vice versa: "You must know that for the federal administrations the network coordinator is the very person of reference: all our requests are passing through the coordinator" (federal coordinator, steering committee, 19.12.2012).

Most of the time, for coordinators themselves as well as for other stakeholders, coordination is also perceived as unclear in the sense that coordinators do not have a clearly defined set of activities they are expected to perform. Coordinators receive blurry directives and quite abstract job-descriptions. One coordinator says: "If you have a look at the post-description, you have to be a superman to have all these qualities... It does not really tell what is expected from you." (One coordinator, 18.08.2017) Another coordinator explains: "But at the beginning, no, you do not know what you will have to do, which direction you should take. And moreover, here we are talking about a coordination coming from the federal level, so there is always a part of mystery, because it is very blurry at start." (One coordinator, 13.06.2017)

Because of the unclear definition of this function, coordination is therefore sometimes seen as producing less visible and tangible work than other professions from the mental health and forensic fields: "I do not want coordinators, I want people who work." (Federal advisor) Coordinators seem to be everywhere while nobody seems to clearly understand what are their missions, how they do achieve those and to which organisation they are depending: "We must beware of those coordinators who are becoming more numerous than health professionals" (Intervention of a frontline professional at a local meeting, 18.11.2011). This ambiguity and the novelty of this function sometimes brings the stakeholders to experience coordination as a threat.

Coordination can be said ambiguous by the fact that stakeholders have divergent interpretations about what it is and what it should be. For instance, while some informants consider the coordinator as a representative of local realities and interests, policy-makers see it as a representative of policy goals. Because of this ambiguity of the coordination work, coordination is often associated by stakeholders to different meanings and different feelings.

For certain stakeholders, coordination is a lousy and ungrateful job, both because of its uncertain working context and its intermediary position. Indeed, despite the uncertain context, the coordinator is held responsible for the success of the policy implementation process: “That is a very ungrateful job, if the project does not work the coordinator is the one who would get the sack! (Interview with the manager of a community mental health service, 20.2.2012). Another stakeholder says:

“I think that it is a quite heavy and difficult job, because it is very multifaceted, with many people who have ...I am not going to say contradictory interests but at least very diverging interests; the hospital sector against the ambulatory one, the private against the public...” (Interview with a psychiatrist, 7.12.2011).

Due to its intermediate position, coordination is the receptacle of the criticisms regarding the policy plans and the way the implementation goes: “It is the coordinator who receives the critics of people. It is necessary to have rather solid shoulders and to know how to distance yourself with regard to what you receive and people.” (Coordinator TSI) To work in such an environment and deal with this uncertainty, some coordinators argue that one of the tool of the coordination work is an intelligent communication and a strategic information sharing.

Finally, sometimes, from the network partners’ perspectives, coordinators can be seen as the plaything of policymakers: since the arrival of the coordinators in the policies implementation processes, the direct contacts between the political sphere and the local care professionals were drastically reduced. It is the coordinators who play this intermediary communication role: “The meeting started with an explicit request made by the head of the PB Hospital to the coordinator to behave as the spokesperson of the project, not of the FPS PH: “public authorities put the coordinators between themselves and local care providers. Coordinators are in a very vulnerable position with regard to public authorities. And public authorities are using those coordinators of different forms and kinds to communicate any kinds of decisions to local care providers.” (Intervention of the Manager of a psychiatric hospital at the beginning of a local steering committee meeting, 15/1/2014)

The coordinators try to overtake this ambiguity by displaying different strategies. They discuss these various interpretations together during discussions with other coordinators, stakeholders as well as during interviews: “You have to find a way to discuss with them – partners – so that they understand you and that they do not see a danger in you”. Coordinators also produce their own temporary interpretation of their function. One of those is that coordinators are a filter: “Before, institutions were used to directly enter in contact with the federal level if they had a request, a need or something else. Whereas now, the federal tries to put an end to that and says that if there is a request, it has to pass by the coordinator. The coordinator serves as a kind of filter, in fact, which is not especially said like that by the federal. So, the federal wants that coordinators are used to put a filter, but with institutions, we do not say it clearly. To protect us.” (Coordinator TSI)

Another way to face the ambiguity of their function is to connect their missions with their faiths. One coordinator says: “I am so much engaged in this project...And I take everything at heart because I do not want that the project falls through...I do believe that we are going to achieve something positive and that is the reason why I continue doing this” (interview with coordinator 4, 30.3.2017). This faith in what they do is rather paradoxical given the uncertainty and the powerlessness they face in their job. Nevertheless, the success of the reform is partly depending on the fact that one coordinator believe in the reform: “From the moment there is a coordinator who believes a little in the reform... it is really at this moment that things can evolve.” (Federal coordinator)

In this section, we showed different characteristics of the work of coordination and its context. First, we have seen that coordination is a new and widespread phenomenon appearing in a context of policy initiative, which is highly uncertain. Second, when questioning stakeholders on their representations, we noticed that the definition of coordination is contested: while policy makers see it as a central element of their policy implementation, other stakeholders see coordination as a lousy and ungrateful job, sometimes as a threat or as the plaything of policymakers. We can therefore say that coordinators face two difficulties: the unclear and uncertain working context and the contested and ambiguous definition of their function. Nevertheless, coordinators seem to know what they want to do and to believe in it (i.e. implementing a policy plan and improving the quality of care), but they do not know how to realise it. And this “How to do it” is neither explained by the description of function, nor by the stakeholders who have different interpretations of this function. Following this, we would like to ask how do coordinators deal both with the uncertainty of the context and the ambiguity of their function while navigating in a world full of knowledge?

### *Coordinators as connection makers*

To understand how the coordinators deal with this uncertainty and ambiguity, it is first of all useful to ask who those coordinators are. As we have discussed it in the theoretical part of this paper, coordinators are a particular type of boundary actors, responsible for connecting divergent ideas, interests and scattered professional expertises and experiences together. It requires a global vision. This view of coordinators is expressed by field actors: “Having a coordinator makes a difference. Before, contacts were made between one structure and another; now, there is a coordinator who has a more global view.” (Coordinator. 2, 10.1.2012) It generates certain expectations with regard to their neutrality: “And to be able to work together for the same target group, for the same subject. And thus that involves that this coordinator has to have the capacity and the possibility of having a certain neutrality.” (Coordinator TSI) For coordinators, the recognition of their neutrality by the partners with whom they work is essential and is one of their source of legitimacy when managing a network with various rival organisations.

The coordinators’ neutrality raises the question of their hierarchical situation: as it is said in the literature, one coordinator must be hierarchically independent from organisations which are part of the

network he managed: “This person must be totally neutral, there is the coordinator, no one above and no one below. He is a facilitator.” (Federal coordinator, steering committee, 19.12.2012) The global vision, the neutrality as well as its hierarchical independency allow the coordinator to play successfully his role of facilitator between people, organisations, sectors and level of action.

This particular hierarchical situation has for consequences that the coordinators’ power has a moving delimitation. For most of the stakeholders and for coordinators themselves, we notice that it is rather difficult for them to identify what are the sources of this power. At first, some stakeholders even said that coordinators have no power:

“You said power!? No, they have no power at all. The power belongs to every care structure and their role is to harmonise the inter-structural, and yes, this is a kind of power, but I mean they have no decision making power. Instead, they can initiate, propose, advise, listen...and...I would say...Making connections.” (Interview with a psychiatrist, 7.12.2011)

The same type of reflection can also arise from meeting discussions: “We are two coordinators, Maurice, and we have absolutely no power!” Maurice answers: “at least we have the power to make connections” (interaction between two coordination, 8.12.2012). In these two extracts, it is striking to see that our informants first postulate that coordinators have no power at all, while changing their mind while discussing about it.

The reason is that coordinators do not have any formal authority over the partners of the local projects. But coordinators do have another kind of power: they are powerful connection makers. This power to make connections does not concern people, but rather processes, and it is therefore quite nebulous and less tangible. The coordinators organise meetings, they decide who will be invited to it and what will be discussed: "The power of the coordinators is on processes and not on individuals, never. You have the power on the how-to-do-it: you manage meetings, its progress, you are the conductor of the meeting." (Federal coordinator) What is at stake for coordinators, in order to keep its power, is thus to stay the one in charge of these processes. The only way to formalise and to stabilise their power is to inscribe him within the collaborations agreements.

In this section, we have learned that coordinators are professionals which have a global vision of their network and that the function require neutrality. We also said that coordinators are powerful connection makers and that their power concerns rather processes and certainly not people. In the following subsection, we will try to understand how coordinators make sense of their function by questioning their linking role, the places and moments when it takes place and the very practices of coordination.

### *Coordination in action*

The heart of the coordination work, as we just suggested, is the linking role. Coordinators are connection makers, bridging different separated or disconnected interests together. During the interviews, only few

respondents directly came to this answer. Coordinators generally talk about operational and immediate objectives as recruiting new partners, doing sensitisation, promoting care for MIOs, and so on. They are therefore talking about the working objectives of the coordinator instead of the practices of the coordination. However, the coordinators and other stakeholders come to enact the definition of the function by talking, either to the researchers interviewing them or together: “I think that the coordinator makes kind of a link between the field and policymakers via the federal coordinator. Thus, there is information going down, but there are also things which go back up to the federal.” (Chief of a psychiatric hospital service) During one meeting of a working group on mobile psychiatric care, one coordinator also said: “The only or the main activity of the coordinator is to create links between institutions and to bring an added value to the existing network” (Coordinator 1, 30.11.2011)

But how do the coordinators create links between institutions? Looking at the coordinators concrete activities, through direct observation, helped us to bring an answer to this question. In this way, we came to see that coordinators spent most of their time in meetings and writing documents (Thunus 2016; Thunus 2015).

Meetings are central to the coordinators mission of network management, they allow them to stimulate the exchange and collaborations between partners. Those meetings are not always formal: the coordinators take part to informal meetings with other stakeholders. Informal meetings can help the coordinator to negotiate something or to fix a problem with one particular partner, to collect informally and more privately more information on one particular element. Most of the time, they are not planned, they have no specific agenda and the meeting discussion are not reported in any documents. They can take the form of a spontaneous consultation in one’s office, during a phone call or a coffee break:

“Meetings? We organise them in a formal way between the three of us and now we have one more coordinator, but we used to do it in an informal way: he ends up here in my office or when I have a question I go to his office, I call him or he calls me. And he makes the same thing with the two other coordinators. Thus there are formal moments and informal moments of meetings.” (Coordinator of a local project)

Organising and participating to meetings also allow coordinators to gather information and to disseminate it, which is an important part of their job: “I meet the stakeholders, I give them information and I try to know what is already existing and to map human and material resources.” (Coordinator. 2, 10.1.2012) Indeed, given their central and strategic position in the implementation of new policy plans, the coordinators have to translate information between the between the professional and political arenas. In this respect, meeting is also a key means to support the reciprocal adaptation of political objectives and professional needs as well as local realities. As stated by a coordinator: “I would like to work on the basis of meeting like this one to come to know what you, as a care structure, are expecting from the network; which are the problems you are currently meeting and how a network like this one could help

you to address those problems” (coordinator 1, meeting of a working group on mobile psychiatric care, 30.11.2011)

*The creation of link through meetings*

The organisation and participation to meetings allow the coordinator to create different kinds of links between different elements and for different reasons: redefining the situation, facilitating discussion, making sense of policy documents, producing coordination documents and so on. These are occasions where knowledge is enacted by being transferred, transformed and translated. Thanks to the empirical material and more particularly thanks to the observations of meetings, we shall focus our attention on identifying and discussing some of the practices deployed by coordinators to create those links.

When the coordinator is the conductor of the meeting, he often has to redefine the situation: recalling what is expected from the partners, at the end of that particular meeting, or the goals of the ongoing discussion. To achieve this, coordinators can, for example, link one particular moment of a meeting with certain objectives of the reform: “We cannot start thinking in terms of “is the patient of” again! Here we must have a functional reasoning. The very logic is to activate the functions.” (Coordinator 2, 15.2.2012). They also redefine the situation by aligning the partners’ different representation of the same things: “We are talking about crisis beds for crisis situations. But what do you see behind the words ‘Crisis situation’? It is essential to have the same understanding if we want to create something together.” (Coordinator TSI)

During meetings, when facing controversial situation, we also observed that coordinators created links between past experiences and ongoing discussions. In this way, they ease the meeting discussions and give an orientation to the sense making activity in which the participants are involved.

“This reminds me of questions that we raised when implementing the therapeutic projects (pilot projects which had started 7 years before), but those who have taken part in this projects benefited from that experience in terms of knowledge, interconnections and coordination” (intervention of coordinator 2, local meeting, 24.01.2012).

The coordinator can also infuse a definition of the situation by linking ongoing discussions to other discussions or events separated in time and space: “Not later than yesterday, Mister X (a senior officer at the federal administration) recalled that the in reform project, as it is conceived at the federal level, the third care function (=rehabilitation, the focus of this meeting) is designed to make the link between care services and other types of services...” (Intervention of coordinator 2, local meeting, 2.2.2012) Another example of a coordinator’s intervention, helping to create link between different meetings: “That is the kind of tool in which the reform’s federal leader are interested. We have a meeting at the federal administration on Friday to learn about good practices related to that instrument” (intervention of coordinator 2, local meeting, 24.2.2012).

Documents are another means used by the coordinators in their attempt to support and orient the meeting discussions. Documents can be the object of the discussion, or what require the meeting participants to make sense of the situation. The coordinator then orient the discussion by linking the document in question to another moment of sensemaking, which took place in another place and at another time: “We (the coordinators) have a meeting with the federal coordinator in one month to come to know ‘how to understand the different aspects of the policy guide’. But the coordinators can also give a particular orientation to the sensemaking process by relating two different documents together: “That is a political document, but I think that their intention is to promote therapeutic consultation for psychiatric patients, if one look at the National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance’s document, the similarity becomes quite clear.” (Intervention coordinator 2, local meeting 10.01.2010).

Documents can, in addition, be used by the coordinators to give shape to meeting discussions. One of the challenge faced by the coordinators during meetings is to produce a representation of the ongoing discussions and summarising them. The following box illustrate a particular moment of enactment where the participants brainstorm regarding the definition of the new care function in mental health (early diagnosis, prevention and promotion of mental health). It allows us to observe how the coordinator actively contribute to the enactment of this definition, by linking different elements and emphasising some elements at the exception of other. Then, by inscribing this definition in the meeting minutes, the coordinator also participate in stabilizing and circulating it through the local network.

[13]: “We must emphasise the idea of pluridisciplinary work.”

[14]: “Inter-sectorial work as well.”

[15]: “I disagree, with the term inter-sectorial we include justice as well. It will raise discussion in relation to medical confidentiality, ethics, and so on. We must specify inter-sectorial in the fields of help and care.”

[16]: “I think that the idea of ‘shared values’ could help us going forward.”

[17]: “Would not it be better to start by presenting us to each other (?); to improve our knowledge of each other, or particularities, our limits...”

[18]: The coordinator responded: “It would be time-consuming.”

[19]: “Our knowledge will run through our interactions, it pervades gradually...It is very interesting, it is progressive but constant.”

[20]: “Don't we have to stipulate something in relation to the outcomes? For instance: the interests of the patient?”

Following that intervention, the coordinator recapitulated the ideas expressed by the participants. He assembled those ideas as follow: 1) active accessibility; 2) WHO's definition; 3) primary care (close to the living environment); 4) networking; 5) help and care; 6) pluridisciplinary; and 7) the interests of the person. He proposed drawing on those expressions to define the general objective: “Partners of the function one have the mission...”

The empirical material used in this section illustrated very well the theoretical assumptions that coordinators are knowledge brokers: they are using different types of knowledge and they not only

gather those together, but they also transfer, transform and translate knowledge. For instance, in order to reinforce the mutual understanding of cultures between justice and health sectors, we observed justice coordinators transferring their knowledge on justice ways of working to the health professionals, and vice versa with health coordinators and justice professionals. Coordinators also transform knowledge during meetings, for example when they orally express and enact inscribed knowledge: we have observed meetings where coordinators were discussing one scientific papers' definition of long-stay devices. Finally, knowledge is also translated during those meetings in order to link, for example, very global and generalist policy demands to local reality. The coordinators' job is to lead the translation process of those demands within the local networks, changing by the way the network reality:

“There is a document that has been sanctioned by the Inter-ministerial Conference and that document cannot be totally reinvented. But, if we want to come to an agreement on our network agreement, we must adapt the (policy) documents to our reality” (intervention of coordinator 3 at a local steering committee meeting, 15.1.2014)

To close this section about sensemaking during meetings, we would like to underline the contingency of this process, depending on different factors: the people's perceptions about others, the people's status, the type of leadership of the coordinator, and so on. For example, the knowledge and the expertise of the present partners as well as the recognised expertise of a person will have a considerable impact over a moment of enactment. Since those moments cited above are improvisations and given that the coordinators' power is on the processes, what is at stake for him is to successfully lead those moments of sensemaking – discussions, translations, negotiations, and so on. Most of the time, the coordinator legitimates its interventions and redirections thanks to the knowledge he has received from policymakers or other similar contexts as meetings, policy implementation, collaboration agreements construction.

Beside meetings, another principal activity for coordinators is writing documents. It can be minutes of meetings, network or collaboration agreements, activity reports and so on. All those documents allow the coordinator to inscribe and stabilise the informal links he created during meetings: “The network agreement that ‘represents a link between the partners’ and specific conventions of collaboration that ‘represents the content of this link’” (intervention of coordinator 1, steering committee meeting, 8.12.2011) What is at stake for one coordinator is to inscribe in those documents a representative description of the sensemaking process' result in order to stabilise the partners' commitment. Those inscriptions in documents represent a formalised output of their linking role and are therefore quite important since it truly helps the coordinator to reduce the environment uncertainty. At many occasions we observed coordinators reworking on one collaboration agreement in order to update the document and to ensure its impact.

In this section, we tried to illustrate some of the very practices of coordination work corresponding to moments of enactment. We saw that the coordinators, during the meetings they organise, deploy

different techniques in order to make sense of their situation. These practices allow them to articulate the visions and interests of the various partners participating to the meeting. We see clearly the linking role played by coordinators: during these meetings, he connects together moments, ideas, visions and people.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Based on our empirical material we can define the coordination as a new and widespread function arising in relation to policy initiatives promoting the development of collaborative practices to better address complex issues, such as mental health problems. They are central to the implementing of policy plans characterized by their globalism and experientialism. This means that a key aspect of the coordination function is the translation global policy plans at the local level. This translation has to be achieved by taking into account divergent problem definitions and cutting across the corresponding sectorial, professional and organisational boundaries.

### *The coordinators facing their paradoxes*

By relying on this definition, we argue that the professional problem shared by coordinators working in different fields, here the fields of mental healthcare and internment, is the abundance of knowledge (Dubois 2017). As we have seen, the coordinators world is full of people and care structures with different interest and claiming different understanding of the problem at stake. The coordinators are dealing with this abundance of knowledge in the framework of a political “mandate” (Hughes 1971) giving them both the right and obligation to get in touch and to meet with a wide range of stakeholders. This political mandate is not complemented, however, by a professional license (idem) defining their conditions of work and set of activities. First, the question of how to translate this political mandate into concrete coordination practices is unanswered. As set out by our interviewees, the formal definition of the coordination function is vague, unrealistic and focused on policy objectives and transversal skills rather than concrete coordination practices. Second, the vagueness of this definition of function makes room for many and often divergent interpretations of the coordination work, making it a contested function. Third, the time frame and resources available for the coordination function are uncertain. Fourth, the coordinators have no formal authority over the professional workers with whom they are working. In absence of a clear licence, they are daily confronted with the problem ignorance: they do not know how to perform their work and to enrol multiple professional workers and local care structures in the development of care trajectories or networks. Thus, we suggest that while the professional problem of coordinator is an abundance of knowledge, their practical problems is their ignorance of the very work of coordination.

Based on this empirically grounded description, we can specify the paradox of coordination outlined following our literature review. This entails shifting the attention from the coordinators axiological and

relational neutrality to their ignorance of the coordination work. This practical ignorance sharply contrasts with their professional problems, lying in an abundance of knowledge. But it also draw attention to the question of how the coordinators deal with it.

*“What do you do, as a coordinator?”*

When asked about the practical and concrete aspects of their work, the coordinators most of time start by enumerating the objectives of their work. As we have seen, it is only reflexively, by talking to us or together that they come to express the core of their work: “making links”.

Making links then appear to be transversal or common to the many actions undertaken by the coordinators to achieve their objectives. But it also appears to be the very source of the coordinators power. Once again, this source of power is enacted through talk. Not only coordinators but also other stakeholders usually start by stating that coordination is a powerless function, before suggesting that “making link” nevertheless constitutes a form of power. It greatly differs from traditional form of power or authority which are based on hierarchical positions or professional expertise. Furthermore, this form of power would concern processes rather than people. The meaning of this processual power might be, as we will emphasise in the next section, the possibility for the coordinators to draw policy process which, in the absence of their intervention, lack of content and orientation.

Shifting our attention from the coordinators professional problem – the abundance of knowledge, to their practical problem – their ignorance of their work, led us to see the coordination function as enacted. In turn, it encouraged us to look at the discourses, discussions and actions from which coordinators derive a sense of their work. In doing so, we came to point out that making links was not only the core of the coordinators work but also their main source of power. Following this, however, we still did not know how and between which kinds of things the coordinators make connections.

### **Enacting the coordination function by enacting the world**

As explained in the methodological section, we examined coordination in action through direct, non-participant observation. Having a close look at the coordinators activities rapidly led us to the conclusion that they spent most of their time attending or scheduling meetings. Therefore, we asked the question of how the practice of meeting contributed to the coordinator core activity, that is, the making of links.

We showed that coordinators use meeting discussions and documents as a support to build connections between incommensurable and previously unrelated things and events. First, the coordinators connect concrete and situated preoccupations with abstract objectives. Second, they link political and professional concerns together. Third, they relate events which were previously separated in time and space with one another. The events and things that coordinators link together are thus systematically of a different nature. Linking incommensurable events together might be, in this respect, the distinctive characteristic of the coordination work: it is the very way in which they make things happen.

The types of resources used by coordinators when trying to reconnect the world are also visible by having a close look at the coordinators meeting practices. These resources first include their personal trajectories and involvement in multiple events and various networks. Therefore, we can say with Weick that more experienced, flexible and mobile coordinators means more sources of inspiration. But personal experience and involvement in multiple and ongoing activities are not the only resources required to perform the coordination work. The coordinators equally have to be able to listen to, understand, and interpret what the meeting participants mean by telling this or that; before re-articulating their interventions. This re-articulation (Corbin & Strauss 2014; Strauss 2009) consists in substituting a logical order to the chronological order of the participants' speeches. To put it the other way around, the coordinators both select specific interventions without consideration for the moment of their occurrence and reconnect them in a way consistent with the political objectives they pursue. This is, according to us, the very way in which coordinators are controlling policy implementing, or their main source of power, and one of the reason why they need to be creative and discerning.

It follows that, by looking at the coordinators meeting practices, we come to understand *why* they need the experience and skills, particularly the creativity and flexibility mentioned in the scientific literature and listed in their description of function. In our case, they essentially need it to perceive every opportunity to bring apparently incommensurable events back together and to articulate them into a new, logical frame.

In the meantime, perceiving the coordination work through concrete meeting practices leads to the conclusion that the coordination work exists only as enacted. As we have seen by going through empirical illustrations of meeting interactions, every performance of the coordination work remains fundamentally contingent on the participants' interventions and inter-alignments on the one hand; and the coordinators ability to interpret and rearticulate them on the other. It is importantly determined by the type and amount of information that the participants bring into the meeting room and the way they expose it, then making (only) a part of the worlds of mental health care or internment available to the coordinator. It follows that coordinators come to know about their work by the very fact of reconnecting these worlds. Or, to put it the other way around: they enact their work by enacting the world.

### ***CONCLUSION: IS ENACTED KNOWLEDGE SO TRANSIENT?***

What does this reflection on the coordinators work implies regarding the scope, stability and mobility of the knowledge which is enacted following the coordinators action? Is this new and common sense of the problem of internment and mental health care fragmentation resolutely uncertain, collective and transient? And what does this means regarding the possible contribution of coordinators to policy change?

The centrality of meeting in the coordinators work reaffirms the collective nature of enacted knowledge. Recognising this collective nature is even, according to us, the only possible way to deal with the resulting uncertainty. It draws attention to the importance of carefully selecting the meeting participants and choosing appropriate meeting time and place. We assume that this will never completely erase the uncertainty of the process. Indeed, meeting discussions eventually depends on the participants' perceptions of and reactions to each other interventions. However this will at least help the coordinators to imagine which type of world might be enacted through the meeting and to prepare its coordination performance accordingly.

Then, the close relationship between particular coordination performance and the common knowledge that it brings about raises the question of the transient nature of enacted knowledge. On the one hand, we must admit that our account of the coordination work largely emphasizes its perpetual movement. One particular performance of the coordination function is, indeed, nothing but the beginning of the next. In this sense, postulating the coordinators initial ignorance of their work means accepting that we, as researchers, but also policy makers have only a very little grasp on the unfolding of the policy initiative managed through the coordination function. This means assuming our own ignorance, and we suggest that it is precisely the reason why both policy makers and researchers keep relying on the misleading assumption of an abundance of knowledge.

But, on the other hand, the embeddedness of enacted knowledge in the coordinators trajectories and work performances brings some consistency back into the policy process. Every performance constitutes, in fact, the conditions in which the following performance occurs. Then, if we assume that every coordination performance is, in Weick' terms, enactive of sensible environment, we can make the hypothesis that enacted knowledge is, to a certain extent, cumulative and continuous. To use an image, knowledge enacted through coordination performances would be the lifeblood of policy processes: it would change it as it flows but, at the same time, it would never end to flow.

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