Enacting Boundaries through Social Technologies – The Dance between Work and Private Life

Steffi Siegert
Enacting Boundaries through Social Technologies
The Dance between Work and Private Life

Steffi Siegert
Abstract

Social technologies have become ubiquitous. As technology in one shape or form infiltrates all areas of life, naturally there are consequences for individuals and organisations. Consequences arise when organisations implement technologies voluntarily but also when the employees use technologies to connect working life and private life in unforeseen ways. Platforms such as Facebook or Twitter enable boundary blurring and crossing, thus allowing the coming together of different areas of life. The concept of boundary work allows one to explore how people address the many challenges that arise as a result of using social technologies partly for work and partly for private purposes. The qualitative study design, complete with interviews and online observations of Facebook and Twitter, employed in this research helps to explore two research questions. Firstly, how do particular affordances of social technologies affect the blurring of boundaries between work and private life? Secondly, how do employees in non-governmental organisations enact boundaries between work and private life, with and in spite of social technologies?

The analysis shows that the particular affordances of social technologies, visibility, persistence and association increase boundary permeability and blending. The concept of boundary work is developed further by distinguishing offline and online boundary work. With the omnipresence of social technologies, it does not suffice purely to use offline boundary work, as people develop a variety of online boundary work tactics, too. The results indicate that challenges for employees are no longer restricted simply to boundaries between work and private life, but they are also expanding into the boundaries between the public and private spheres. As a consequence, this study suggests that many online representations exist, and organisations would gain substantially from understanding the differences between them, in order to better address changing conditions.

©Steffi Siegert, Stockholm 2015

ISBN 978-91-7649-269-7

Printed in Sweden by Holmbergs, Malmö 2015
Cover: Unicorn Comet by Lora Zombie
Distributor: Stockholm Business School, Stockholm University
To my family
The PhD journey is incredibly rewarding, even though at times it feels like walking in a foggy forest without a compass. One of the many things I learnt is that research really isn’t a lonely endeavour, it is a group effort. Along the way I met many amazing people, without whom this dissertation would have never happened or, for that matter, been finished.

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisors, Jan Löwstedt and Hans Rämö, for always trying to understand what most of the time I didn’t understand. Thank you for walking that long, winding and sometimes very confusing road with me. You turned my unstructured "stream of consciousness" into an understandable text. Whenever Swedish academic culture or just academia in general puzzled me, you enlightened me. I am truly grateful for our discussions, your questions, your answers and just overall your support during this endeavour.

Secondly, I would like to thank the great discussants I had for my thesis proposal, mid-term and final script. You improved this dissertation greatly and helped me sort through my wild collection of ideas and impossibilities. Thank you Tommy and Christofer, Robert and Anette, Mikael and Jan!

Thirdly, this journey would have been so much less fun – and probably downright boring – without the amazing colleagues I met, not just at my own institution, but also from across the world. I’ll probably have forgotten someone, but be assured you have been, and you are, important. I’d like to thank Sara, Elia, Hanna, Anton, Emma, Mikael A., Janet, Dong, Alisa M., Andreas, Alisa S., Niklas, Ester, Petter, Fatemeh, Markus, Anna W., Gustaf, Dordi, Amir, Viola, Andrea, Anna E., Danilo, Maira, and Massimo, all of whom have been great colleagues. We discussed research, we celebrated each other’s successes, sometimes we celebrated without any particular reason and sometimes you just provided a shoulder to cry on. You made the struggle worthwhile.

I would also like to thank more senior members of the management section. Thank you Jessica, Annika, Karin, Birgitta, Torkild, Svante, Ali and Carl for commenting on and reading what I’ve written throughout the years. Thank you Magnus for being a great “teaching teacher” and colleague. And then there is Linnéa, without whom this dissertation might not have happened. You aren’t just the world’s greatest doctoral programme coordinator, you are also the sunshine that accompanied me during every lunch I enjoyed at the Faculty
lounge. You always have a kind word and a bit of motivation to share. Thanks!

Then there are my dear colleagues (and by now they have become friends) from across the world. Thank you Chris S., Miikka L., Constanze, Neil, Elizabeth, Marc and Sophie, my feminist sister in crime. You have all broadened my horizons, made me laugh until I fall off my chair and are just completely amazing human beings. And while I am on the other side of the world I’d like to use the chance to say thank you to Professor Marian Baird and Professor Linda Duxbury, who generously invited me to visit them at the University of Sydney, Australia, and Carleton University, Canada. You are exceptional and inspiring academics, amazing role models and living proof that female professors aren’t unicorns. Thanks a million times for having me and helping me!

In this colourful collection of supportive and amazing people I am including my very cool friends that I affectionately call my "cheering squad". They sent me letters, parcels, emails, WhatsApp messages, kitten pictures and their love and support continuously throughout those five years, but especially during the past year, when the light at the end of the tunnel quite often looked like an oncoming train. You are just amazing. Thanks for being you Anja, Stefan, Keeha, David, Imke, Julia, Susan, Magda, Doreen and Fabien. Your support means the world to me. Even though life doesn’t always turn out the way we plan, I am grateful to have spent those past years with you, Emanuel. You have been kind and supportive and I am glad we met five years ago.

Close to the end of the text I’d like to thank my family. You deserve to be at the top of this list and any other "thank you" list I’ll ever write in my life, but the order is no indication of priority. For once, I think I am lacking the appropriate words to express the amount of gratitude I feel for you. You are without question the best family anyone could ever hope for. Thank you for being there, being direct, being supportive and being unquestionably awesome. I love you to bits. Mom, you are by far the best mother possible, and I am truly grateful for all the parcels you packed, our conversations, hugs and your unconditional love.

Finally, I have been incredibly lucky to have such an inspiring, empirical context. During these past five years I have come to appreciate the work carried out by many non-governmental organisations. My participants made and make me question so many of my preconceived notions of the world. They allow me to believe that humanity might not be as rotten as I thought. I am grateful and delighted to have such remarkable participants. Thank you a million times for doing what you do, for being great human beings and for donating your time and your digital information to this research. THANKS!

I would like to acknowledge the financial support provided for this research by the Swedish Management and Information Technology Research School MIT, the Handelsbanken Hedelius Foundation, the Gålstiftelse and FORTE.
## Contents

Abstract

Acknowledgements

List of Figures

List of Tables

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Social technologies and the negotiation of boundaries
  - 1.1.1 Affordances – the means for negotiation
  - 1.1.2 The social technology phenomenon
- 1.2 What is the problem?
- 1.3 What is the aim?
  - 1.3.1 The context of the study
- 1.4 Structure of the dissertation

2 Theoretical Framework

- 2.1 Boundary theory
  - 2.1.1 Boundaries between work and private life
  - 2.1.2 Boundary work
- 2.2 Technology and work/private life boundaries
  - 2.2.1 Negative consequences and conflict
  - 2.2.2 Boundary management
- 2.3 An affordance perspective on social technologies
  - 2.3.1 Social technologies
  - 2.3.2 Affordances
  - 2.3.3 Enacting boundaries and social technology
- 2.4 Weaving together boundaries, affordances and enactment
6.4 Tentative online findings ........................................... 188

7 Boundaries and availability ............................................. 189
  7.1 Increasingly blurred boundaries .................................. 189
    7.1.1 Visibility .................................................. 191
    7.1.2 Persistence ................................................. 192
    7.1.3 Association .................................................. 194
    7.1.4 Editability .................................................. 197
    7.1.5 Availability and autonomy .................................. 197
  7.2 Meeting the change ................................................. 202
    7.2.1 Physical access restriction .................................. 203
    7.2.2 Technological separation .................................... 204
    7.2.3 Mental separation ........................................... 205
    7.2.4 A characterisation of online boundary work ............... 207
  7.3 Summarising ........................................................ 216

8 Shifting boundaries ..................................................... 219
  8.1 Affordances of public social technologies ....................... 220
  8.2 Offline and online boundary work .................................. 222
    8.2.1 Offline boundary work and social technology ................ 222
    8.2.2 Online boundary work ....................................... 225
  8.3 From work-private to public-private ................................ 226

9 Conclusion ..................................................................... 229
  9.1 Dancing between work and private life ............................ 230
  9.2 Theoretical and methodological implications .................... 231
  9.3 Practical implications .............................................. 232
  9.4 Future research ..................................................... 234
  9.5 Reflections on using one’s personal social technology accounts
      for research ......................................................... 235

Sammanfattning .......................................................... ccxxxvii

References ................................................................. ccxxxix
List of Figures

3.1 Facebook for the sake of work ......................... 68
3.2 A Twitter example of an employee-instigated post .......... 86
3.3 A Twitter example of an employer-sanctioned post .......... 87

5.1 The infinite loop of negotiating boundaries between work and private life ........................................... 134

6.1 Employer-sanctioned post in an academic context ........ 172
6.2 Employee-instigated post in an academic context ........ 177
6.3 Organisational culture post in an academic context ...... 183

7.1 Four different online boundary work tactics ............... 209
# List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Participants and their organisations</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>An overview of code development</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Three ideas about work</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>External, organisational and individual expectations</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Different initiators of boundary blurring</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Different ways of enacting boundaries</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Summary of online observations</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Affordances, autonomy and availability</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

How would I do that? I would... I don’t know... maybe I would have two Facebook accounts [laughs], one for work and one for private. That would be really hard. What would I do then with [Tick], [Trick] and [Track]? Which account would I have them on? If I had one private account and one for work... it would be really hard to place them as individuals. (Paul)

The present study is focussed on how employees of non governmental organisations (NGO) enact boundaries between work and private life using, but also in spite of, social technologies. While the PhD students who participated in the pilot study and who provided the introductory quote may not be driven by ideology to the same extent as are the NGO employees, the quote nonetheless brings to life the general phenomenon of how we enact boundaries.

Kanter (1989) suggested in 1977 that the division between work and family is a “myth” – not necessarily a lie, but all the same a myth, a story everyone wants to believe but which is simply not the whole truth. During the late 20th century, the division between work and home has turned more into a question of flexible working arrangements. Allvin et al. (2006) use the term “gränslös arbete”, which translates roughly into “boundary-less work”, to shed light on the changes taking place in our work arrangements that allow us to work wherever and whenever we respectively want or have to work. They acknowledge that this development does not necessarily have exclusively positive side-effects. Social technologies play a significant role in the continuous development of “boundary-less work” and consequently contribute to the negative and positive side-effects.

1.1 Social technologies and the negotiation of boundaries

Ubiquitous technology and changing economic circumstances have altered fundamentally how the boundaries between private life and work are constructed. With increasing economic pressure and the notion that one should love their work (Jaskunas, 2015), people feel a greater need to give more to their employer – and technology enables them to do so. This phenomenon is far more prevalent in certain professions, but it seems unlikely that its wider
development will stop any time soon. Orlikowski and Scott (2008) argue convincingly that the relative oversight of technology in organisational studies is problematic, as technologies are critical tools and there is virtually no indication that their prevalence will decrease in the coming years.

Looking back at the 1970s and 1980s, flexitime and telecommuting were seen as new and positive developments, both of which were made possible by technology. The idea of a win-win situation for the employer and the employee through flexible working hours and arrangements, facilitated through teleworking, for example, may well have been an illusion, because most of these arrangements tend to meet the flexibility needs of the employer rather than the needs of the employee, as Wise et al. (2007) note. Moreover, Hilbrecht et al. (2008) even goes as far as to suggest that working mothers have experienced varying levels of exploitation, due to their double shifts at work and at home. This might be an unfortunate outcome of the division between work and life – two entities which are viewed as separate but in fact are not for many employees (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006; Warhurst, 1996). However, not all technology-based flexible working arrangements are policy-based; technology also enables the surprising and out-of-the-ordinary intrusions of one area into the other, namely work-related aspects taking up non-work time and vice versa. That could involve anything, from email blinking on the Blackberry at 10pm or office chat centring on the latest Facebook comment from weekend activity.

Life does not consist exclusively of care, and it is not easily to separate it from work, as different parts are intertwined and they change dynamically according to shifting life conditions (Cohen et al., 2009). The fact that work and non-work activities might not be easily separable, and that some employees might not wish to do so, is not the focus of more traditional perspectives on the work/life balance. Before industrialisation, many families worked for their own consumption, but with the onset of industrialisation the perception of work changed, and so employment in factories with predefined working hours increased accordingly. Work and family were spatially separated, which led over time to the development of different norms and behaviours.

An unfortunate aspect of the work/life balance debate is the focus on equivocal assumptions and perceptions, such as equating work with something negative and the perception of life as care-centred. Consequently, work/life balance arrangements enable the employee to combine what s/he has to do (work) with what s/he wants to do (care), though this ignores the working reality of a lot of people in, for example, the creative industries (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006; Lobo and Friebe, 2006). That work and non-work activities are linked and sometimes intertwined does not imply that boundaries between both areas and between people are unwanted.

Nowadays, work and non-work activities move closer together again by
means of, for example, teleworking, self-employment and the voluntary usage of different kinds of technologies. What we see might simply be another technological change that is challenging our relationship with work and how we construct boundaries or could even lead to a new shift in norms and behaviour, thereby making it a default for blending different areas of life into each other regardless of space and time. There is something happening in the interaction between humans and materiality – and that something is the (re-)negotiation of boundaries. An ongoing debate exists about the work/private life balance, but now the change is specific due to the affordances of social technologies.

1.1.1 Affordances – the means for negotiation

The idea of affordances, suggested by Gibson (1979), implies that humans, as well as other living creatures, relate to inanimate objects in terms of their affordances, i.e. the possibilities for action they offer. The affordance perspective has been used in studies about technology and organisations, in order to understand why the same technology can be used and perceived so differently in different contexts, and it is these studies that allow us to shed light on how the affordances of social technologies vary and can be perceived as either enabling or constraining. Furthermore, they enable us to understand how people can perceive the same technology differently and enact different patterns of use based on the affordances they perceive.

As Leonardi (2013, p. 70) explains, ‘[m]ateriality exists independent of people, but affordances and constrains do not’. This is what defines the use of social technologies and their influence on the blurring of boundaries. Facebook has a befriending function, does not discriminate between different audiences and has a default setting that is open; nonetheless, this does not mean that everyone connects with everyone and is broadcasting their breakfast choice alongside their political opinion. Similar discrepancies occur in relation to how people use social technologies for work. Just because it is possible (features allow for the easy sharing of links and articles), not every employee perceives this as an affordance for their job.

Treem and Leonardi (2012) describe four affordances that they see as crucial for distinguishing social technologies from other communication technologies, namely visibility, persistence, editability and association, which represent the four characteristics on which social technologies continuously rank highly. Visibility refers to a technology’s ability to make visible connections, interests and knowledge visible, in short how easy it is to gain access to information (Treem and Leonardi, 2012, p. 150), while persistence relates to the accessibility of information in its original form, which has been somewhat diminished by social technology’s affordance of editability which collectively
enable the individual to edit and delete posts and links as necessary. Neverthe-
theless, as always with information online, once something is on the internet,
there is no taking it back and traces of its prior existence can be found (Treem
and Leonardi, 2012). Finally, associations are conceptualised as existing be-
tween people/people, people/information and, as Vaast and Kaganer (2013)
points out, between people/organisations.

1.1.2 The social technology phenomenon

It can be claimed easily that there have always been new technologies and that
there will always be new technologies, notwithstanding the fact that the origi-
inal printing press might have been more life-changing than Facebook could
ever be. Here we come back to the initial thought. If social technologies are
here to stay, then it might be a good idea to learn to handle them in a less
intrusive way, and for this we first need to understand the phenomenon and
its consequences. Similarly to groupware or other organisation-wide imple-
mented technologies that have provoked a significant amount of research, the
prevalence of social technologies has gained attention.

Social technologies have become ubiquitous Vodanovich et al. (2010), and
so with increasing digital connectedness and its intrusion into all areas of life,
it seems sensible to look at the consequences for humans and human inter-
action. In the present study, the term “social technology” refers to different
variants of software that enable human beings to communicate and engage
with each other. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Skype. I
consciously chose a broader interpretation, because I agree with Leonardi and
Barley (2008) and Orlikowski (2010), who do not see technology as a black
box enforcing certain behavioural patterns but rather consider the interplay be-
tween human beings and technology.

The different types of relationships we experience, namely intimate, social
and working relationships (Mehrabian, 1971), are dealt with by using bound-
aries which are defined as the instances that separate and bind together peo-
ple in a relationship by pronouncing similarities and differences (Giddens,
1984). This is done in order to negotiate closeness or distance in these re-
lationships. Looking at currently available social technologies, such as Face-
book, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter and Pinterest, one can see that unless an
extremely strict division with no spill-over whatsoever is employed, bound-
aries will inevitably be challenged.
1.2 What is the problem?

Significant research has been undertaken on technologies implemented by organisations (Fenner and Renn, 2009; Leonardi and Barley, 2008; Orlikowski, 2007, 2010; Wajcman, 2006). This is supplemented by research on the influence of more traditional technologies used to connect the two areas of work and private life (Chesley, 2005; Duxbury et al., 2013; Matusik and Mickel, 2011; Wajcman et al., 2008). Additionally, there is a compelling amount of research concerned with the work/life balance (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Cohen et al., 2009; Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Kreiner et al., 2009; Powell and Greenhaus, 2006), in which technology is – if at all – included more as a side condition but not as a significant boundary-influencing element. Research looking into the “grey zone” of the half-private, half-work use of social technologies, and their influence on boundaries between work and private life, is relatively rare due to the young age of the technology and the research field. Ticona (2015) clarifies that most studies looking at the influence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) are concerned with technologies sanctioned or required by the employer, and very few of these look at the voluntary usage of ICTs (social technologies like Twitter) in a work context.

The affordance perspective, as proposed by Hutchby (2001), Leonardi and Barley (2008) and Leonardi (2011), has accumulated significant interest and research in recent years, with Treem and Leonardi (2012) and Vaast and Kaganer (2013) applying it to explain changes brought about by social technologies. Treem and Leonardi (2012) focus on the use of social technologies sanctioned by and used in organisations, whereas Vaast and Kaganer (2013) explores the presence of affordances in social media policies across a wide range of industries. Research employing an affordance perspective, to understand the potential re-negotiation of boundaries between work and private life, could not be identified.

In the work/life balance literature, boundaries are a well-researched aspect but not from an affordance perspective. Models about integration and segmentation (Ashforth et al., 2000; Olson-Buchanan and Boswell, 2006), boundary work tactics (Kreiner et al., 2006, 2009) or research evaluating and discussing different boundary attributes (Bulger et al., 2007; Cohen et al., 2009) offer a very good understanding of boundaries. Additionally, technology, especially social technology used voluntarily, is usually not included as an influencing factor, probably due to their relative novelty.

In their encounters with technology, users do not have access to all of the sensory information and contexts with which they would come into contact in a real-world setting (Weick, 2001). Interaction on platforms like Facebook or Twitter naturally lacks certain sensory information, but there was nothing
there before anyway, since Facebook creates a place for new kinds of activities; for instance, prior to its introduction, I would not show my colleagues every single baby photo in my possession, or tell them about the delayed subway in the morning. They probably also did not know about the bathtub I want to sell, or my love for bacon. In this regard, social media platforms provide access to information that people would not have known about each other a few years ago, thus potentially enabling boundary blurring and crossing through the moulding together of different areas of life.

Overall there is a paucity of research dealing with social technologies and the boundaries between work and private life, especially when the usage of these technologies is not officially sanctioned by an organisation. Ticona (2015) offers a notable exception by looking at the use of social technologies in the workplace for dealing with emotions, finding that Twitter can help in this respect, at least for service workers. Equally, Charoensukmongkol (2014, p. 340) suggests that ‘social media use at work may not necessarily lead to negative job-related outcomes’. The study is concerned with organisational support for the use of social technologies at work, but it says nothing about the potential consequences for boundaries or private lives. Competing results are suggested when it comes to leisure browsing during work time, with a recent study by Coker (2011) supporting the positive effects of the practice without focusing on social technologies. In an effort to strengthen research in the area of social technologies and work, Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013) develop a promising theoretical framework for online boundary management tactics with open, audience, content and hybrid behaviour, albeit so far without any empirical testing or support.

1.3 What is the aim?

Social technologies have the potential to change the way we work and the way we relate to work. Therefore, it is necessary to study these changes for our understanding of work and our boundaries between work and private life. Platforms such as Facebook or Twitter enable boundary blurring and crossing, i.e. they allow the coming together of different areas of life. The aim of the present dissertation is thus to explore how the boundaries between work and private life are enacted in relation to the increasing use of social technologies. Two research questions guide this process:

1. How do social technologies affect the blurring of boundaries between work and private life?

2. What tactics do people employ to deal with these changing conditions?
1.3.1 The context of the study

Assuming that social technologies shape the boundaries between work and private life in some way, it seems important to find an empirical context in which the phenomenon can be observed at a relatively early stage. These changes might be more pronounced in non-governmental organisations. The context of NGOs was chosen because their employees demonstrate a high level of commitment and intrinsic motivation, which in turn might make them more likely to exploit all available resources for their organisation, including their own social capital. As the aim of this research is to understand the influence of social technologies on boundaries between work and private life, a group of workers that is willing to go that extra mile seems suitable for our purposes.

Working for a non-governmental organisation is often associated with giving “meaning” to work. Through the Protestant work ethic, capitalist modes of production are infused with meaningfulness (Weber, 1904), and the same ethic posits the idea of the value of work for its own sake (Beder, 2001). The Protestant work ethic in turn is the foundation of the developing idea of work as a ‘calling’ (Bell and Taylor, 2003) which is consequently expected to be directed toward the greater good of society and human kind.

People working for NGOs often use exactly these arguments about meaning and giving service to the greater good, in order to justify not only certain material disadvantages, but also longer working hours. Despite certain material disadvantages, employees of NGOs regularly report higher levels of job and life satisfaction (Wrzesniewski, 2003). However, it should be pointed out that empirical research so far has not indicated significant differences between not-for-profit employees and for-profit employees when it comes to the value they attach to personal development, money or the work in relation to other activities in life.

NGO employees display a high degree of passion and commitment, and in this context technology creates freedom to work at different times, in different places and in varying ways, though it also creates limitations regarding the setting of boundaries, because now it is possible to work in the evenings or on the train on the way home, and it has become easy to connect with activists to keep them motivated etc. NGO employees could therefore be seen as “passion workers”, whereas certain other industries are populated more by “payroll workers”.

1.4 Structure of the dissertation

After this introductory chapter the dissertation continues with the theoretical framework in chapter 2 and the method chapter 3. In the two chapters 4 and 5
I present the relevant parts of the interviews, structured according to the main concept “work,” while simultaneously introducing working life within NGOs and in the following chapter “expectations”, “boundaries” and “technology”. This is followed by chapter 6, in which I present a series of online observations. In the following chapter 7 I present the analysis of the interviews combined with findings from the online observation. The penultimate chapter 8 contains the discussion of the findings in relation to the theory, and this is followed by the conclusions in chapter 9.
2. Theoretical Framework

This dissertation focuses on how social technologies affect the blurring of boundaries between work and private life and what tactics people employ to deal with these changing conditions. Castells (1996) sees the “Net” and the “self” as opposing structures, with the network replacing earlier organisational forms such as hierarchies, and the self representing everything an individual does to acquire a sense of social identity and meaning. The network therefore resides at the macro level of analysis, while the individual, replete with sensemaking and identity formation, can be found at the micro level. With the aforementioned interest in the individual, I divert away from Castells’ interest in the macro level, though I do follow the author’s assessment Castells (1996, p. 7) regarding the role of technology when he elaborates that it does not change society per se; rather, it has the capacity to enable societies to change.

The chapter starts with a discussion on the boundaries that lie between work and private life, what they are, how they have been theorised in the literature and how boundary theory helps to understand blurring through social technologies. This is followed by an introduction to the idea of an affordance perspective for the study of social technologies in the workplace. Concluding, the enactment aspect of sensemaking, for studying boundaries and technology, is described.

2.1 Boundary theory

In order to understand boundaries it is useful to look at the way other disciplines understand them. The concept of boundaries has been used in multiple disciplines to define different types of limits. Political scientists, for instance, use them to define geopolitical areas, anthropologists employ them to explain in- and out-group behaviour, psychologists use them to elucidate where the self begins and ends, sociologists employ them to illuminate societal dynamics and organisation theorists look at system boundaries, to name just a few examples. Additionally, at least in organisational studies, boundaries have been researched, discussed and defined from different angles and under varying premises. Boundary characteristics have been offered by Weick (1979), who characterises them as changing, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978); Schwartz (1996)
and Scott (1998), who claim that boundaries are ambiguous, and March and Simon (1958) and Perrow (1986), who point out that they are permeable. Hernes (2004) has looked at the defining qualities of boundaries for different organisational forms and discussed them in the context of the spatial construction of organisations. As helpful as these perspectives may be, in order to reach to the core of the term, I shall to anthropology.

Boundaries have been a widely discussed topic in anthropology for many years as Cohen (1994a,b), Fabian (1983) and Wallman (1986, 2002) illustrate. Cohen (1994b) defines them most helpfully and compares them to “frontiers” and “borders,” with which “boundaries” are often confused. All three words, admittedly, express “contiguity” Cohen (1994b, p. 63), but there exist significant differences in regard to their exact meaning. Cohen (1994b) distinguishes between frontiers and borders as matters of fact, while boundaries are viewed as claim-based. A boundary is therefore based on the perception of certain features by at least one party. These features allow for distinction, but the subjectivity of the individual party also makes boundaries contestable. They are based on the conscious perception of distinguishing elements and are less fixed than frontiers through, for example, laws or politics. Moreover, a boundary is a matter of consciousness, because if it does not exist in your head, it is not there, even if there exists, for example, a physical obstacle. Cohen (1994a, p. 57) explains that

the border is a social fact. Whether or not it signifies difference is a matter of social construction, and is more properly thought of as one of boundary. If border is fact, boundary is consciousness, and the difference between them is crucial.

In addition, Cohen (1994b) adds that borders are facts, but whether they actually make a difference for the individual is a matter of social construction, it is when the border becomes a boundary, when it becomes a conscious notion that the individual perceives a difference Cohen (1994b, p. 71). If boundaries are seen as a matter of consciousness and not as institutional dictations, they become more amorphous and ambiguous Cohen (1994b, p. 69).

Attention has been given to the individual human being and her boundaries in the work/private life balance literature (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Cohen et al., 2009; Kreiner et al., 2009). Even though research in the area has not been concerned primarily with more social forms of technologies, or with technologies used voluntarily and for personal reasons by individuals, valuable insights can nevertheless be gained regarding boundaries. Kreiner et al. (2006) offer a very broad and helpful definition in this regard when they state that

boundaries as used in the literature refer to the physical, temporal,
and cognitive limits that define domains as separate from one another and define components within domains. “Domains” consist of the cognitive space of what is included within the boundary. Boundaries separate domains from one another; both enable and constrain how domains are connected and interrelated; and define aspects within domains. (Kreiner et al., 2006, p. 1318f)

The authors continue by explaining that boundaries are not fixed entities but are open for negotiation by the individual, i.e. the involved parties define the location and the nature of the boundaries. According to Kreiner et al. (2006), there are basically two possible locations for a boundary which therefore define their type: external boundaries are located around a domain and determine where it begins and ends, while internal boundaries reside within domains and delimit possible sub-domains (Kreiner et al., 2006, p. 1319).

The different types of relationships we have, namely intimate, social and working (Mehrabian, 1971), are dealt with by using boundaries, which are defined as the instances that separate and bind together people in a relationship by pronouncing similarities and differences (Giddens, 1984). This is done to negotiate the closeness of or the distance between these relationships.

Social and symbolic boundaries

Important in the context of relationships is the definition and distinction between symbolic boundaries and social boundaries Lamont and Molnar (2002, p. 168f.) offer:

Symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality. […] Symbolic boundaries also separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership (Epstein 1992, p. 232). They are an essential medium through which people acquire status and monopolize resources.

Furthermore, social boundaries are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and the unequal distribution of resources (material and non-material) and social opportunities. They are also revealed in stable behavioural patterns of association, as evidenced in connubiality and commensality. Only when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon can they take on a constraining character and pattern social interaction in important ways. Moreover, only then can they become social bound-
aries, i.e. translate, for instance, into identifiable patterns of social exclusion or class and racial segregation (e.g. Massey and Denton 1993, Stinchcombe 1995, Logan et al. 1996).

Two things are noteworthy at this juncture: firstly, symbolic boundaries are a “necessarily but insufficient condition” for social boundaries, and secondly, boundaries are so interesting because they allow one to look at a fundamental process in human interaction, namely that of relationality. Relational processes can be found on all levels of social interaction, from the micro (social identity) to the macro (national identity and spatial boundaries).

Lamont and Molnar (2002, p. 186) conclude their study with four statements about the relationship between symbolic and social boundaries. Firstly, symbolic boundaries are used to enforce and maintain social boundaries. Secondly, symbolic boundaries are also used to challenge or re-frame social boundaries. Thirdly, the linkage between social and symbolic boundaries can vary between different cultures (social boundaries can be linked to different symbolic boundaries in different cultures) and finally, symbolic boundaries can become so strong that they turn into social boundaries.

Epstein’s (1992, p. 232) more concise version, which also inspired Lamont and Molnar (2002), makes boundaries more haptic by turning them into “lines,” such as battle lines in a war or the lines between countries on a map, by stating that “‘[s]ymbolic boundaries’ are the lines that include and define some people, groups and things while excluding others’.

Both definitions imply some form of group identity, but the experience of a boundary is very individual, in that each individual decides not only where she sees herself belonging to, but also how close is too close, or close enough, in a relationship. This decision determines to a significant degree what and how much information is shared. Social boundaries are therefore an umbrella, a more theoretical concept that includes and is expressed in, for example, spatial or psychological boundaries. Individuals use different means, such as space, time or the disclosure of information, to create, support and maintain their own – psychological – boundaries. To summarise the above, it could be said that symbolic boundaries are a necessary condition for social boundaries, in that both kinds of boundaries demand a significant amount of effort (boundary work or the different mechanisms identified by Tilly, 2004) and symbolic boundaries seem to outrank social boundaries.

2.1.1 Boundaries between work and private life

Distinctions have been made in the literature, mainly between work and home or life. The term “work” usually refers to paid work as a result of employment. The work/home pairing does not take into account changes through technology
which have moved the office for a significant amount of people into the realm of the home, public transport, cafés or even cars (during the daily drudge in a traffic jam).

The second pairing, work/life, somehow implies that work is not a part of life. This distinction seems out-dated and confusing, as work for many people is a significant part of their life. This is not just a matter of time spent on certain activities; work can – and for most people does – give life a certain level of meaning (see Rosso et al. (2010) for a discussion on the “meaning of work”).

Meaning is constructed individually and can therefore be found in the most unusual places. A recent and telling example involves the heated political debate following the cancellation of an extension to an arms deal by Sweden with Saudi Arabia in the spring of 2015 (see for a commentary Wearing, 2015. There have been no shortage of arguments for the necessity to continue exporting arms to a dictatorship, which indicates the almost limitless human capacity to construct meaning, even under seemingly averse conditions.

Regarding the two different terms, “balance” and “conflict,” used in the literature, neither of them is particularly suited to helping understand the changes brought about by social technologies. Following Powell and Greenhaus (2006) and Greenhaus and Powell (2006), and their ideas about enrichment and the positive effects of spillover from the domains of work and non-work, the opposite of enrichment does not necessarily need to be understood as conflict but simply as a lack of enrichment. In the present study I am open to both positive and negative outcomes in relation to the usage of social technologies and relational boundaries, which in turn makes both “balance” and “conflict” unsuitable.

The notion that the ’Work-life balance is a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person’s job and personal life are equal’, as defined by Kanwar et al. (2009, p. 3), is unsuitable for understanding changing conditions and boundaries between work and private life in general. In opposition to Kanwar et al. (2009), the work/non-work balance is not seen as a “state” which implies stability and equal distribution, as the average worker has no means of distributing her time, effort or attention symmetrically or evenly. Following a conversation with a fellow researcher, I would like to quote him directly, as his words capture most perfectly the ideas behind the usage of the term “balance” in the present study:

Due to its fluidity, “balance” is something that is constantly being sought, but not always achieved. As a verb, it entails the act of trying to find a balance, while equilibrium is the penultimate achievement of that pursuit. One can be in search of balance, but one is never looking for equilibrium. (Eric-Oluf Svee, 11th July, 2011)
The balance between work and non-work activities therefore has nothing to do with the stability or equal distribution of resources—it is a matter of perception and satisfaction with the allocated resources Clark (2000) and whether or not the individual perceives a certain degree of control over this allocation. The focus on boundaries allows us to answer questions on how people deal with the changing conditions and to decipher what these changes actually look like instead of looking solely at the distribution of resources.

Technology might facilitate or increase the blurring of boundaries between work and other areas of life, but it is by no means a completely new phenomenon. The blurring of boundaries happens easily without the involvement of technology, and Pedersen and Lewis (2012) show that integrating different parts of one’s life into each other can be a conscious and voluntary choice. Whereas literature about technology’s influence on work/private life boundaries might sometimes create the impression that technology does not leave a choice, Pedersen and Lewis’s research suggests that employees are quite conscious actors that choose to blur, for example, colleague and friendship relations. Another influential point, made by Pedersen and Lewis (2012, p. 476), is that segmenting and integrating are not mutually exclusive and that boundaries are ‘dynamic in space and time’.

Ransome (2007) points out that the rather narrow debate in the work/private life balance literature focuses too much on households with children, where work/private life balance choices are not just influenced by necessities such as paid labour and care, but also by what people choose to “pull” into their lives. Ransome (2007) therefore suggests the term “total responsibility burden,” which includes work, “life” and recreational labour.

In market societies the nature of work is mainly determined by where it takes place, an involved payment and the wage relation, but not necessarily by the inherent properties of a particular activity (Gorz, 1989). Work is equated with activities carried out in return for a wage, while life includes all activities that are needed to maintain the household and which do not involve paid employment. Recreational labour, in the meantime, encompasses all activities performed as a response to the ‘autonomous desire for personal satisfaction and enjoyment’ (Ransome, 2007, p. 378).

Even though I agree fundamentally with the arguments posited by Ransome (2007), I suggest the term “discrete responsibilities” as a more adequate description for all of the things people integrate into their lives. “Burden” evokes mainly negative connotations, but neither work nor activities located in the private realm need to be perceived in such a way. The points made about voluntarily pulling things into one’s life, and the suggestion for a more inclusive approach towards creating a greater variety of households, present a relevant point for the present study. The influence of technology occurs regard-
less of whether you have kids or not – it is just a matter of how the individual addresses it and creates meaning around it.

2.1.2 Boundary work

Our relationships with other people are one part of our boundary work. How do people make sense of the changes that the use of social technology brings about? How do we manage our boundary work to achieve a sense of contentment if technology enables a very fundamental disruption of our practices?

Nippert-Eng (1996a) defines boundary work and clarifies that it is an ongoing process:

“Boundary work” consists of the strategies, principles and practices that we use to create, maintain and modify cultural categories. It is the never-ending, hands-on, largely visible process through which classificatory boundaries are negotiated by individuals. Boundary work is what allows categories and classification systems to exist, to be meaningful, and to change over time. It is boundary work, therefore, that allows culture or society to do the same. (Nippert-Eng, 1996a, 564)

Kreiner et al. (2006) look at boundaries between different identities, and interestingly enough they state explicitly that the fit between different identities is a matter of individual perception, in that there are no objective characteristics which can be defined if identities fit. Considering the empirical context of this dissertation, namely employees of non-governmental organisations, it is quite likely that they identify to a high degree with their organisation, which in turn might contribute to rather permeable boundaries.

As described by Kreiner et al. (2006), one characteristic of a boundary is permeability (the degree to which one domain can spill-over into another domain, psychological and behavioural involvement). The thickness of a boundary is the degree to which elements from one domain can pass through the boundary to another domain; strong or thick boundaries increase/enable/preserve segmentation, whereas thin boundaries contribute to the integration of one domain (or aspects thereof) into another.

Clark (2000) adds three important boundary characteristics to the aforementioned permeability that reflect the degree to which elements from one domain enter another. Flexibility is the degree to which boundaries are bendable, and it finds practical expression in time flexibility (work whenever) or spatial flexibility (work wherever). Flexibility of the psychological boundary enables the individual to think about the other domain while in the current domain (Clark, 2000, p. 757). Blending, on the other hand, concerns the area
around a boundary when it is no longer exclusive, which could be the case when people become friends with their co-workers and engage in half-work, half-private activities as in, for example, a trip to a museum, where work topics are discussed.

The final characteristic is *boundary strength*, which corresponds neatly with the boundary permeability suggested by Kreiner et al., with impermeable and inflexible boundaries being strong, while permeable and flexible boundaries are weak (Clark, 2000, p. 758).

Clark specifies three different forms of boundaries, namely physical (where an activity takes place), temporal (when) and psychological, all of which she describes as rules individuals create ‘that dictate when thinking patterns, behavior patterns and emotions are appropriate for one domain but not the other’ (Clark, 2000, p. 756). At the same time, Clark is the only scholar to emphasise that

the primary connection between work and family systems is not emotional, but human. People are border-crossers who make daily transitions between two worlds – the world of work and the world of family. People shape these worlds, mold the borders between them, and determine the border-crosser’s relationship to that world and its members. (Clark, 2000, p. 748)

In a later work, Kreiner et al. (2009) describe the conflict between work and private life as a sub-set of role conflict. For the authors, any kind of struggle with boundaries between work and private life is based fundamentally on identity struggles. Kreiner et al. (2009, p. 705) conceptualise the boundary between work and private life as being socially constructed, and consequently they see the individual as an active agent. The authors describe boundary theory as focusing on ‘the ways in which people create, maintain, or change boundaries in order to simplify and classify the world around them (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000)’ (Kreiner et al., 2009, p. 705).

Segmentation-integration and the connection to artefacts

Kreiner et al. (2006) focus on the relationship between segmentation/integration and individual/organisational identity, suggesting that the

---

Clark uses the term “border” and creates a comparison between work and private life in relation to different countries. I acknowledge her arguments, but I side with Cohen (1994b), by conceptualising boundaries as a matter of conscious perception, and Kreiner et al. (2009, p. 705), who argue that boundaries are socially constructed. For greater consistency I therefore employ the term “boundary”.

---
greater the identification with the organisation, the less segmentation an individual will strive for. Kreiner et al. go further to define three different identity boundary dynamics which can occur within sub-identities (intra-identity) and between individual and organisational identities (inter-identity). Intrusion means that a boundary is perceived as too permeable and that a particular aspect can intrude into other domains. This can occur within the individual identity, the organisational identity or between the two. In case of perceived intrusion, boundaries can be described as unstable, and individuals seek resolution through change. The same happens when too much instability is perceived between individual and organisational identities, or within the identity of an organisation (Kreiner et al., 2006, p. 1326ff.).

**Distance** could be described as a lack of permeability. The impression of distance can occur, for example, between an actual identity and one to which one aspires. Similarly to intrusion, discomfort with the status quo can lead to change (Kreiner et al., 2006, p. 1328ff.). **Balance**, on the other hand, is perceived if it seems possible to accept and embrace ambivalence. This is possible not only for sub-identities, but also between individual and organisational identities.

Nippert-Eng (1996a) as well as Ashforth et al. (2000) focus on a segmentation/integration continuum, with Nippert-Eng (1996a) clarifying that real people fall short of both ideals; instead, they integrate and segment along multiple dimensions with as much discretion as possible (Nippert-Eng, 1996a, p. 568). Nippert-Eng (1996a) looks at boundary practices that help to reflect social maps through our own spatial and temporal maps. What we do with physical artefacts reflects our mental boundary setting, for which the author suggests multiple dimensions (clothes, food, money, people, calendars) although keys exemplify her point particularly well, in that integrators have all their keys together, and work and private life come as a “package deal,” whereas separators might use different key chains or empty key rings to separate their work and home keys.

Cohen et al. (2009) see problems with the attempt to quantify work and life, and instead they suggest including autonomy, control and identity in the conceptualisation of the work-life balance. For the authors, work and non-work domains are not fixed and stable entities but ‘socially constructed, politicized, and contested’ (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 230). In addition, they include the two categories segmentation and integration, as suggested by Nippert-Eng (1996b) and Ashforth et al. (2000) in their framework, but come to the conclusion that flexibility and permeability cannot be the only influencing factors in the perception of the work-life balance, because if they were the only relevant factors in this regard, academics would face a non-issue, as they enjoy both to a high degree.
Cohen et al. (2009) discovered in their auto-ethnographic study that loss of control causes discomfort. Along a continuum from a high level of control to a low level of control, the authors conceptualised their lived experiences. On the high level of control end, maintaining order is situated with segmenting, integrating, and importing (purposeful spill-over), while on the other end of the continuum the authors experienced disorder, described as seeping (blurring of boundaries), invading (unintentional spill-over) and overwhelming (boundaries are unwillingly and completely breached) (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 235). In the category “maintaining order”, the authors perceived a high degree of personal agency and orderliness, whereas events or moments falling into the second category caused a feeling of lack of control (to varying degrees) and disorder.

Kreiner et al. (2009) find in a study with priests (not quite the same as NGO employees, but potentially not far off either when considering commitment and passion) four different kinds of boundary work tactics. The authors distinguish between behavioural (people, technology, triage and differential permeability), temporal (short- and long-term), physical (adapting physical boundaries, manipulating space, managing artefacts) and communicative tactics (expectation management, violator confrontation) (Kreiner et al., 2009, p. 716f.). Some of the distinctions seem to have more of an analytical value than a practical differentiation, as the adapting of physical boundaries, for example, seems nearly indistinguishable from the manipulation of physical space, though the four tactics nevertheless make an invaluable contribution to understanding boundary work.

Up until now I have established the micro-level focus of this dissertation as opposed to Castells’ (1996) macro-level, network focus. I have provided an overview of how boundaries have been defined and conceptualised in different fields, with a focus on the work/private life balance literature. This included three different boundary characteristics and four boundary work tactics to deal with incongruence regarding work/private life boundary violations or conflict. Concluding, I introduced the idea of boundary work as one way of understanding how people address the changes social technology is bringing to their boundaries.

2.2 Technology and work/private life boundaries

Even though the following studies do not deal explicitly with outspoken social technologies such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn, they nevertheless offer valuable insights into the general attitudes and behavioural patterns surrounding technologies and the work/life balance. Studies dealing with the work/life balance and social technologies are on their way, but they have not reached
the broader public yet, due to the relative newness of the phenomenon. Even though Facebook, for example, has existed for roughly 10 years, the first users had not been working for that long, and the adoption of the broader (working) public just happened over the last three to four years. This does not leave much time for the phenomenon to develop or to carry out research and publishing it in an academic system that is not exactly streamlined for speed.

As clarified in the introduction, there is a paucity of research dealing with social technologies and the boundaries between work and private life, especially when the usage of those technologies is not officially sanctioned by an organisation. Ticona (2015) offers a notable exception by looking at the use of social technologies in the workplace to deal with emotions. Equally, Charoensukmongkol (2014, p. 340) suggests that ‘social media use at work may not necessarily lead to negative job-related outcomes’. Competing results are suggested when it comes to leisure browsing during work time, with a recent study by Coker (2011) supporting the positive effects of the practice, albeit without focusing on social technologies.

Barley et al. (2011) and Middleton and Cukier (2006) clarify that the ubiquitousness of mobile technologies especially allows for an invasion of time and space by work that has profound consequences on how, when and where we work, and how we perceive the boundaries between work and private life. These new technologies are fundamentally disrupting how we work and how we relate to other people. This disruption per se does not need to be either positive or negative; it simply provides a change in the way we do things, although Barley et al. (2011) suggest that new communication technologies together with changing economic conditions are one contributory factor to overwork.

When looking at research considering information and communication technologies (ICTs), it becomes clear that there is no consensus regarding the effects on work/life boundaries. Some researchers suggest an increase in the blurring of boundaries between work and other areas of life (e.g. Chesley, 2005; Chesley et al., 2003; Towers et al., 2006) with negative consequences (e.g. Boswell and Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Fenner and Renn, 2009) or dysfunctional behavioural patterns (Middleton and Cukier, 2006). Other researchers do not draw a clear connection in this regard (e.g. Golden and Geisler, 2007; Wajcman et al., 2008), whereas Park et al. (2011) suggests that technology use at home partially mediates work detachment, which is important for employees’ recovery and health. Cousins and Robey (2005), however, question even the connection between blurred boundaries and conflict.

Seeing the work-extending opportunities provided by technology as being rather critical, Towers et al. (2006) focus on mobile technologies and how these blur the boundaries between home and work, thereby allowing work to encroach on family time. Towers et al. (2006, p. 615) conclude with the obser-
vation that technology has not just increased the ability to work during former non-work hours, but it also creates the expectation to do exactly that. When work is no longer measured by hours spent occupied with certain tasks and in a specific location but by the very completion of projects, then working until the project is finished, no matter where and when, becomes the norm (Towers et al., 2006).

The authors take a critical stance on the “time is money” approach, which they see as one underlying reason for attempting to eliminate downtime by providing work-extending technologies (WETs). These technologies in turn provide opportunities for control and monitoring in a more subtle way by prompting employee self-regulation (Green, 2002, p. 41), which is one reason for working non-traditional hours. Additionally, identity work can play a role why people become work-extenders (Towers et al., 2006). The most important point is probably that time and space boundaries remain fluid as long as people feel they are on duty (Towers et al., 2006, p. 615) – technology is enabling, but people also need a reason for using technologies in this way.

Fenner and Renn (2009) find that instrumental beliefs (perceived usefulness) and organisational expectations (psychological climate) are related positively to technology-assisted supplemental work after hours, while Matusik and Mickel (2011) conclude quite differently that the organisation does not play such a central role in defining the beliefs of the individual. In the case of voluntarily used social technologies in the context of NGOs, it is possible that not only social pressure, but also the strong commitment to the goals of the organisation could influence usage for working purposes.

Towers et al. (2006, p. 607) offer three interesting observations regarding the use of technologies. Firstly, there exists an overlap between what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, which is dependent on the frame of reference of the individual. Secondly, people display cognitive dissonance in regard to certain behaviours: if they do it, it is acceptable, if others do it, they condemn it as unacceptable. Thirdly, and probably the most ironic observation of them all, the personal use of WETs is seen as inappropriate whereas the use of personal time for work through the means of WETs is hardly questioned (Towers et al., 2006, p. 607).

Importantly, Towers et al. (2006, p. 611) conclude that for their group of heavy users the combination of technological affordances and a culture of hours blurs the boundary between work and private life. It is clear that neither of the two alone – affordances or culture – is solely responsible for an increase in working hours. Similarly, Barley et al. (2011) add to the existing research by making visible the social processes that are seen as being as equally important as the material qualities of any given technology. They conclude Barley et al. (2011, p. 902) that without the social, material and quasi-material properties
surrounding emails, it is difficult to see emails not only as a source but also as a symbol of stress. Their respondents also explained that being on top of one’s email mountain is perceived as a good sign of control.

Mazmanian (2013) draw similar conclusions in regard to Blackberry use and how social expectations surrounding this practice contribute to blurring boundaries between work and private life. The authors take it one step further and suggest that shared assumptions can lead to heterogeneous interpretations and practices – even though people share frames of reference, they interpret and act differently (Mazmanian, 2013, p. 1226). The authors also include a very helpful discussion on the “materiality” of the technology, dividing it into three levels, namely ‘functional aspects (asynchronous, text-based, push communication), physical aspects (size, weight, button size) and symbolic aspects (cultural narratives of how the technology acts as a prop or symbolic marker)’ (Mazmanian, 2013, p. 1240). It is clarified that these heterogeneous interpretations are enabled by differences in regard to the perception of professional identity, the materiality of the technology, vulnerability to social pressure and visibility in the organisation – and that only the last two can be changed. Within the same organisation different practices can evolve, because differences in regard to these four dimensions exist (Mazmanian, 2013, p. 1245).

Related to this point, Middleton and Cukier (2006) identify ‘dangerous, distracting, anti-social’ mobile email usage patterns that can be considered dysfunctional even though their respondents had convincing arguments for seeing their behaviour as efficient, functional and liberating. In agreement with others, Middleton and Cukier (2006) specify that technology for many people simply enables pre-existing tendencies to blur boundaries between work and non-work, with a clear emphasis on instrumental beliefs about perceived usefulness.

Mazmanian et al. (2013) describe an autonomy paradox, as people use technology all the time and see it as a sign of personal autonomy, but in effect they actually reduce their own autonomy by using it all the time and everywhere. The authors point out four collective consequences of this “all the time, everywhere” attitude. Firstly, engagement is escalating as a result of people producing and reinforcing a 24/7 culture of availability. Secondly, shared assumptions about everyone constantly checking their devices have led people to believe that indeed their friends and colleagues are constantly reachable. Thirdly, expectations for fast replies have risen significantly, and finally, people perceive an increase in stress, as there is no more downtime and certainly no time to think (Mazmanian et al., 2013, p. 9f.).

Two things stand out in this regard: firstly, autonomy in the workplace is not a stable characteristic that comes with a certain position or job; indeed, it
seems to be quite dynamic and more dependent on practices and expectations. Secondly, people rationalise their potentially anti-social email usage patterns by claiming to be hard-working and motivated while seeking to take on the blame for their dissatisfaction themselves. Furthermore, they shift the norms of what it means to be a knowledge professional (Mazmanian et al., 2013, p. 11).

2.2.1 Negative consequences and conflict

MacCormick et al. (2012) make a compelling case for the dangers of over-engagement. It is indeed problematic, not just for the individual (health risks and family conflict), but also for the organisation, with individuals being at risk of burnout, subsequent decreased efficiency and the ruinous effects of an organisational culture setting unattainable standards (MacCormick et al., 2012, p. 195). The authors suggest that smartphones enable longer hours, more access and a broadening of the scope of activities with social platforms adding new channels. MacCormick et al. (2012) clarify that mobile technologies have raised expectations in organisations. Firstly, information is generated and distributed a lot faster, and people are therefore expected to make use of these data. Secondly, the existing, often single-minded focus on profit and shareholder value relies on people exploiting themselves, as it encourages hard and ever-extending work (MacCormick et al., 2012, p. 195). Technology allows for deep immersion, and those people who wish not to be connected all the time might actually end up feeling ‘out of the loop’ (MacCormick et al., 2012, p. 196).

From a work/private life conflict-focused perspective, Chesley (2005) links mobile phone use to negative spillovers, increased distress and lower family satisfaction. Computers do not seem to have the same effect as their mobile technological counterparts, though, which Chesley (2005) suggests might be not only because users are more acquainted with computers (they have learned how to deal with them), but also because computers are more passive. Of course, mobile phones can be turned off as well, and by now it should be expected that people’s cognisance regarding hand-held devices has increased, but the difficulty lies in the actual act of turning off, with very few people even considering this option any more.

Fenner and Renn (2009) and Boswell and Olson-Buchanan (2007) report the negative consequences of using communication technologies for work after hours by increasing work/life conflict, the latter including the significant others of employees. One of the most influential conclusions of Boswell and Olson-Buchanan’s study is that working after hours does not seem to be the main problem; rather, it is the possibility that work might intrude on personal time
Research in the area of media and communication studies addresses the dislocation of social worlds through social technologies and associated challenges, but the organisational context is rarely considered. The field of research that is concerned with challenges which arise out of loose networks (Papacharissi, 2009), the dislocation of social worlds (Boyd, 2007) and the disembodiment of audience and performance (Pearson, 2009) has not looked at the boundaries between work and private life in particular but rather at different identities and their online negotiation. The main challenge with dislocation and disembodiment is the growing lack of context, a dilemma which is illustrated vividly by the glass bedroom metaphor (Pearson, 2009), whereby people engage online in partly private conversations, even though they are aware of the fact that others might walk past the glass walls and stop to watch.

As Boyd’s description of dislocated social worlds and unwanted friend requests exemplifies, the physical walls between the office and the bar serve not only as a safeguard for physical distance, but also as context-giving facilities (Boyd, 2007). The spatial setting allows people to assess and choose appropriate behaviour and to be protected against too much information. This is a problematic attribute of a significant proportion of the social technologies that are available today, in that sometimes, one simply receives too much information, which in turn destroys the appropriate distance and leads to discomfort (Boon and Sinclair, 2009, p. 102). This “information overload” can be especially relevant when it comes to considerations regarding boundaries between work and private life, since knowing that one’s colleague is still sitting in the office at 9pm could, for example, challenge one’s work morale. Too much information can also blur or destroy psychological/cognitive boundaries that may be important for one person but not for another.

The potential difficulties caused by technologies can be summarised in four points. Firstly, the amount of time people work is increasing, due to the ability to take work home and use formerly designated “personal time” to complete tasks. Secondly, organisational expectations are increasing. This concerns mainly availability and response times, which are designed to lead to an increase in productivity. Thirdly, constant engagement with work prevents disengagement and recovery, both of which are vital for employee health. Finally, a relatively new concern, the strategies employees use to deal with changes might mask actual institutional sources by ‘over-individualizing risk and responsibility’ (Ticona, 2015, p. 1).

In contrast to some of the aforementioned studies (e.g. Chesley (2005) examining mobile phone usage, Bittman et al. (2009) present conflicting results indicating that mobile phone usage is not associated with interrupted leisure time. Instead, they suggest that mobile phones allow one to use ‘dead time’
and therefore perhaps relieve some of the pressure that comes with potentially unlimited availability. Bittman et al. (2009, p. 686) support the notion of the human being as a capable actor that is not free from structural constraints, but they also posit that she is not helplessly overwhelmed, stating that ‘[t]his study did not uncover any evidence to support the claim that the perpetual contact afforded by mobile phones has accelerated the pace of life beyond people’s perceived capacity to cope comfortably’. In essence, people simply do not feel more rushed or pressured just because they use the mobile phone to a higher extent (Bittman et al., 2009). The idea that ICTs in general might accelerate the pace of life is not refuted, but Bittman et al. (2009, p. 687) nevertheless claim that

these findings suggest that the socially constructed boundary between home and work that typifies the condition of wage labour is not dissolved by the technological capacity for perpetual contact.

It seems there a perceived intensification of work is mediated mainly through mobile phone use during working hours (Bittman et al., 2009). These findings are consistent with Towers et al.’s (2006) study and their conclusions about the intensification of work. The literature offers competing findings regarding the consequences of the capacity for perpetual contact via mobile phones, and additionally we do not know if and how far the use of social technologies (often accessed on mobile hand-held devices) contributes to work outside traditional hours.

Despite a possible perceived intensification of work, Wajcman et al. (2010) found that the internet at least is used to a greater extent for private purposes during work time than it is for work purposes during non-work times. The authors draw the conclusion that when used for work purposes outside work hours, the internet can even assist in work/family balance and that possible strains are related to general job characteristics rather than going online (Wajcman et al., 2010, p. 271). Some caution might be appropriate in this instance, though, given that data for the study were collected in 2007, when mobile and social technologies were less common and the data were based on questionnaires and diaries which might leave room for misinterpretation; a respondent can easily work three hours after traditional work hours answering emails but use the internet just for 10 minutes to send all the replies. Nevertheless, seeing the individual as an actor making conscious decisions adds an important dimension.

One highly underrated aspect is the materiality of technologies which, according to Wajcman and Rose (2011), actually contributes to people’s ability to not perceive mediated communication as an interruption. As technologies (as well as social platforms) have an in-built memory function, people do not
feel an immediate need to attend to every signal that comes in their direction the moment it happens. Precisely this option – being able to choose when to re-
act – contributes to people not feeling pressured by interruptions, even though from the outside it may appear that the working day becomes chopped up into a number of pieces. On the other hand, technologies are increasing the pace of how information is produced and distributed, which might therefore demand immediate reactions.

In a similar vein, Wajcman et al. (2008) conclude that mobile phones are used for more intimate contact with friends and family and not so much as a tool for work extension. The individual is seen as being a conscious actor that might even welcome the softening of the boundary between work and private life, as it enables deeper connections with significant others. Wajcman et al. (2008) see the development toward boundary-less families positive, but caution is advised, as an increase in accessibility might change the rules of the game and incursions into personal time may become more frequent.

2.2.2 Boundary management

Stutzman and Hartzog (2009) looked at the usage of multiple profiles in different social technologies for the purpose of boundary regulation. They found three discrete methods of boundary regulation in different social technologies: multiple accounts on the same site, one account with highly sophisticated privacy controls and boundary regulation through segmenting by the site. These methods are closely linked to a suggested conceptual framework for online boundary management, posited by Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013), who connect the two theory streams of boundary management (segmentation and integration) and self-evaluation to develop four different online boundary management tactics (open, audience, content and hybrid). The authors reason that different forms of self-evaluation have different outcomes in relation to respect and liking in a professional context; Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013) continue in this vein by describing each of those strategies and their potential consequences in this regard.

In the present study I would like to divert attention away from the idea of respect and liking and instead focus on boundary management and the expression of different online boundary management tactics because the focus of the present study is on the changes social technologies have created for boundary management. Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013, p. 660) suggest that the macro choices people make regarding segmentation and integration and their self-evaluation are likely to evolve over time, possibly not on a day-to-day basis but more likely resembling the pattern of punctuated equilibria. These changes could be triggered by career changes, changes in personal circum-
stances, feedback from professional or personal contacts or organisational and occupational norms (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013, p. 660f.).

As one of the few studies looking at the use of social technologies in a work context, Ticona (2015) shows how different groups of employees use technologies differently, i.e. how service workers use it to resist, whereas knowledge workers create inaccessibility. The author takes a very critical stance and concludes that both groups reasoning indicates an increasing over-individualisation of risk; the focus is squarely on the individual, and if you are not successful in your efforts to gain control, the only person to blame is yourself.

Duxbury et al. (2013) find competing results in regard to the individualisation of risk. They divide their respondents into three groups, namely segmentors, integrators and struggling-segmentors, with the first two clearly allocating the responsibility for a successful and satisfactory use of mobile technologies (in the context of boundaries between work and private life) to the individual, whereas the last and biggest group focuses on the organisational responsibility and called for policies and rules to deal with the expectation to be available after hours (Duxbury et al., 2013, p. 14).

Matusik and Mickel (2011) offer competing results regarding the role of the organisation and the perceived pressure to be responsive and accessible all the time through the use of mobile devices. Apparently, organisations have a more limited influence than commonly assumed, and participants are divided between enthusiastic reactions, balanced reactions and trade-off reactions (Matusik and Mickel, 2011, p. 1015f.). The authors conclude that the perception of mobile technologies and their potential for blurring boundaries seems to be rather personal and, to a limited degree, influenced by the organisation (Matusik and Mickel, 2011).

### 2.3 An affordance perspective on social technologies

In the following part of this theory chapter I will focus on what social technologies are and how an affordance perspective can help to understand the particular challenges they create for an individual’s boundary work and management.

#### 2.3.1 Social technologies

To understand what is meant in the present study by “social technology,” both words within this term need to be specified separately. Human beings that prefer living with others in a more or less organised form are called “sociable”; one is social when enjoying the companionship of others. Given that it might
need some mind-stretching to see how people can enjoy the companionship of others in a virtual environment, it nevertheless helps to understand the basic idea underlying the use of the word “social” together with technology, as social technologies allow people to interact, communicate and, more in general, gain a sense of companionship through their use.

Although the term “social technologies” includes more than just social networking sites, the definition offered by Ellison and Boyd (2013, p. 159), a development from Boyd and Ellison’s (2008) first definition, provides a useful starting point. The authors define social network sites (SNS) as

a *networked communication platform* in which participants 1) have *uniquely identifiable profiles* that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-level data; 2) can *publicly articulate connections* that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with *streams of user-generated content* provided by their connections on the site. (Ellison and Boyd, 2013, p. 159) (italics in original).

Profiles are a representation of online spaces, but they are no longer static; instead, they are aggregates of other users’ activities, not just self-representation but a portrait created by activities and data provided by multiple sources (Ellison and Boyd, 2013, p. 155). Especially compared to older forms of communication, the variety and transparency with which different audiences are included is changing communication patterns. What we observe on SNSs is no longer profile-centric but media-centric – a notion which has important implications for boundaries between different areas of life.

Audiences are mixing, and the sites on which they meet are centred more and more on posted content – what you do instead of who you present yourself to be. Therefore, clear boundaries are harder to achieve, as people from different realms of life can post and comment and interact, largely outside the control of the individual. Ellison and Boyd (2013, p. 160f.) summarise that what social network sites are really about is the ‘sharing of content with a bounded group of users’, and what is special about “social media” is not the technology itself but the socio-technical dynamic that evolves when millions of people use the technology ‘to collaborate, share information, and socialize’.

Even though Carr and Hayes (2015) would not consider Skype a social medium, I find their premise limiting and not necessarily helpful in understanding how the working lives of people change. Skype accounts, at least for now, are often the personal accounts of individuals used for work purposes, which blends time boundaries and mixes audiences. It might not afford one-to-many communication, in the the same way Twitter does, but there is
no question that it allows people to be social with different audiences and at
times traditionally reserved for other activities. As mentioned before, social
network sites are just one form of social technology: others include wikis
(Wikipedia), blogs (WordPress), social tagging applications (Delicious) and
microblogs (Twitter). In the present study the focus has emerged inductively
by asking participants about their user behaviour and the technologies they use.
Therefore, Facebook and Twitter gain most attention along with the occasional
consideration of Instagram, LinkedIn and Skype.

Orlikowski (1992) limits the scope of the term “technology” to material
artefacts (software and hardware), in order to maintain a distinction between
the actual materiality of technology and how human beings design and use
these artefacts. As Leonardi and Barley (2008) clarifies, materiality matters
when it comes to the actions of people, as it enables them to interact with
technology and to do things in new ways (Leonardi and Barley, 2008, p. 161)
as well as to adjust technology and organisational structures to their own needs.

Orlikowski and Iacono (2001, p. 131) give five helpful premises for the
theoretical conceptualisation of a technological artefact. Firstly, technology is
never neutral and is simply a given object; it is always influenced by human
beings (either through design or use). Secondly, it is embedded in material and
cultural conditions; there is a difference between using the internet in Swe-
den or in China. Thirdly, fourthly and finally, technology consists of multiple
fragile components, and it is constantly changing through social and economic
practices. Following Leonardi and Barley (2008) and Orlikowski (1992, 2010),
I consider technology as a collection of artefacts whose material qualities mat-
ter in its ongoing interaction with human beings.

In a last step I would like to explain why I will not use the term social
“media” even though the word “medium” is sometimes used interchangeably
with technology. McLuhan (2003) includes more or less everything in his
definition of media, as he sees them as ‘extensions of self’. In this respect
they have profound consequences, as they introduce a completely new scale to
things. He explains that the

personal and social consequences of any medium – that is, of any
extension of ourselves – result from the new scale that is intro-
duced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any
new technology. (McLuhan, 2003, p. 19)

In this sense, a medium could also be language, books and even the air we
breath. As this collides with the notion of the material artefact proposed by
Orlikowski (1992, 2010), and to avoid appearing ignorant of the whole field of
media science with its many implications of the word “media,” I shall use the
word “technology” throughout the rest of the present study.
Having defined and narrowed down “social technology,” I would like to broaden it a little by referring to Boyd, who states that

“social software” is about a movement, not simply a category of technologies. It’s about recognizing that the era of e-commerce-centred business models is over; we’ve moved on to web software that is all about letting people interact with people and data in a fluid way. It’s about recognizing that the web can be more than a broadcast channel; collections of user-generated content can have value. No matter what, it is indeed about the new but the new has nothing to do with technology; it has to do with attitude. (Boyd, p. 17)

Her idea is impressive and in a way very descriptive, as she leaves out all of the discussions about the medium and the physical and focuses instead on the actual change that justifies the use of the term. However, what might be slightly problematic at this point in time is the gap between the ideas of technology-savvy academics and the general population. For most people this is not exclusively about the software they use as confidently as a bike; for them, it also has to do with material experiences and devices.

On a theoretical level, my understanding of social technologies is still extremely broad. First and foremost, it includes newer platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, Ello and YouTube – platforms that simultaneously allow the interaction of people with each other, the publication and dissemination of information and the ability to reach out to a broad, partly anonymous, audience. However, during the study I learned that emails also contribute to the dilemma faced by many employees as to where and how to set boundaries, not necessarily through the technologies’ own merits but by the immediate access most employees enjoy with the help of their smartphones. Even though emails are beyond the general remit of this study, they still are still part of employees’ everyday experiences and are therefore included as part of the phenomenon.

2.3.2 Affordances

The fundamental idea of affordances was introduced by Gibson (1979) when developing further the psychology of perception. Gibson suggests that humans, as well as other living creatures, relate to inanimate objects in terms of their affordances, i.e. the possibilities for action they offer. For instance, a human might perceive a river as a source of water and transportation, whereas a wild cat most likely perceive it as a dangerous obstacle on its hunting trip. Consequently, affordances differ according to who is assessing the situation and the context in which it is assessed.
This idea of affordances has been used in studies about technology and organisations to understand why the same technology can be used and perceived so differently in different contexts. Hutchby (2001) uses the idea of technology as a text that is written and read by developers and users (provided by Grint and Woolgar, 1997, p. 70), takes it further and argues that affordances enable and constrain certain readings and writings of technology. Hutchby (2001) insists that not all readings and writings are possible (as Grint and Woolgar (1997) would argue) but that the affordances of the technology delimit what can be read and written. He argues that

affordances are functional and relational aspects that frame, while not determining, the possibilities for agentic action in relation to an object. (Hutchby, 2001, p. 444)

Hutchby (2001) does seem to conflate the features or properties of a technology and its affordances. Those properties exist independently of an individual’s interaction with the object, as Gibson (1979) suggests, and they can limit the reading and writing that is possible in relation to that particular technology. Affordances are perceived by users and developers and in turn are shaped by relational and functional aspects. For Hutchby (2001), functional affordances are very physical, as some activities are afforded by a certain technology, while others are not; for example, I cannot use a photocopying machine to make coffee. Relational affordances are particular to the species using a certain technology. Again as an example, I cannot walk on water but a water boatman affords the-walk-on-ability (Hutchby, 2001, p. 448).

The literature in subsection 2.1.1 shows that studies looking at technology and boundaries in the broadest sense provide conflicting results on the potential outcome for the individual. From an affordance perspective this is not necessarily surprising, as the social environment shapes whether affordances are perceived as enabling or constraining and which affordances are perceived in the first place. Orlikowski and Scott (2008) lean in a similar direction, emphasising that researchers’ different views on technology influence the design, choice of methods, interpretation of results and the outcomes of studies.

Orlikowski (2007) criticises that when technology is considered in organisational studies it is treated as something singular that can be thought of occasionally, and the focus is either on technology’s effects on or interactions with technology. The author takes a post-humanist stand, deviating from the human as centre and suggesting that agency is nothing inherent but is realised through the mutual entanglement of actors (Orlikowski, 2007, p. 1438). She supports her argument by showing how Blackberry use has changed over time, not because of inherent qualities in the technology but because of the increasing entanglement of the ways people communicate with the Blackberry. Similarly, a
Google search will not yield the same results tomorrow as it does today, because the search engine is not just searching reality but creating it (Orlikowski, 2007, p. 1440).

After a thorough overview of the field, Orlikowski and Scott (2008) start their research by conceptualising technology as discrete entities (research stream I), followed by the idea of technology and organisations as mutually dependent ensembles (research stream II). Finally, the authors offer a new direction for future research with socio-material assemblages. The focus shifts away from impacts (research stream I) and interactions (research stream II) towards agencies and shifting assemblages. Furthermore, Orlikowski and Scott (2008, p. 455) depart from how technology influences humans to focus on ‘how materiality is intrinsic to everyday activities and relations’.

In my theoretical framework I do not follow Orlikowski and Scott (2008) but instead employ the affordance perspective put forward by Leonardi and Barley (2008) and Leonardi (2011) (which corresponds to Orlikoswki’s research stream II). The affordance perspective allows the researcher to shed light on how the affordances of social technologies vary and how they can be perceived as either enabling or constraining. Moreover, it enables one to understand how people can perceive the same technology differently and enact different patterns of use based on the affordances they perceive. I will follow Barley (1988), or what Orlikowski and Scott (2008) classifies as “research stream II,” and investigate the interactions between people and technology and their mutual dependence.

As Leonardi (2013, p. 70) explains, ‘[m]ateriality exists independent of people, but affordances and constrains do not’. These affordances are linked to what people perceive to be possible, and this distils the very essence of what the use of social technologies and their impact on the blurring of boundaries comes down to. Facebook, for example, has a befriending function, does not discriminate between different audiences and provides a default setting that is open. However, this does not mean that everyone connects with everyone and is broadcasting their breakfast choice together with their political opinion, as similar discrepancies occur as a result of people’s usage patterns at work. Just because it is possible (the features allow the easy sharing of links and articles), not every employee perceives this as an affordance for their employment.

Barley (1988) takes the position that in order to understand how technology re-structures and changes work, researchers need to focus on three things, namely the actions and interpretations of individuals, technological affordances and the larger socio-economic environment. Zammuto et al. (2007, p. 752), in their introduction to a special issue, focus on affordances when saying that ‘[a]n affordance perspective recognizes how the materiality of an object favors, shapes, or invites, and at the same time constrains, a set of spe-
specific uses’. The authors recognise that technology and organisations do exist independently of each other, but how they shape organisational form and functions derives from their enactment (Zammuto et al., 2007, p. 753). DeSanctis and Poole (1994) point out that there is support for the idea that many of the effects of technologies are not so much a result of the inherent properties of the technology but of its usage by people, and they suggest the term ‘adaptive structuration theory’ to describe a focus on the interplay between technologies, social structures and human interaction.

The value of using an affordance perspective is twofold. Firstly, it is not possible to predict the use of a certain technology on the basis of its features. Considering the affordances the individual perceives can therefore help to understand why people use the same technology differently, and consequently, social aspects need to be taken into account. Secondly, the potential consequences of technologies for the boundaries between work and private life are not easily predictable. Using an affordance perspective thereby allows one to focus on both aspects of the relationship technology-boundary, the material and the social aspects (what people actually make of the technology and its features).

Aligning with Leonardi and Barley (2008), I argue that materiality matters because it enables people to interact with technology. However, this does not neglect the importance of the social. Since technological determinism came out of fashion, researchers do not really look at how people interact with technology – or why. Studies do consider its use for communication and data storage, but it can do so much more (Leonardi and Barley, 2008, p. 164); in the context of the present study, for instance, it can assist or constrain boundary management.

Leonardi (2011) conceptualises affordances and constraints through the imbrication of human and material agencies. The way the human and the material overlap creates certain conditions (in the form of routines and technology) that shape how people do things. The author goes on to explain that ‘perceptions of constraint lead people to change their technologies while perceptions of affordance lead people to change their routines’ (Leonardi, 2011, p. 147).

Research from a human agency perspective argues that people could do differently with the technology at hand, while the material agency perspective assumes that technology does certain things without the involvement of the human. Both notions conclude that the relationship is unidirectional, meaning that humans change their routines and technology is static, therefore leaving humans to manoeuvre around the technology. Human agency deals with constraints and capabilities imposed by the technology (Leonardi, 2011, p. 148).

Treem and Leonardi (2012, p. 146) make the fundamental point that ‘materiality exists independent of people but affordances do not’, thereby clarifying
that affordances can change across different contexts but material properties limit what a technology affords.

Furthermore, Leonardi (2011, p. 148) argues that technology can be changed and it is flexible, because the context in which it is embedded allows people to have it modified. This is not the case, however, for social technologies which, along with their features and developers, are so far detached from users (despite claims of ‘perpetual beta’ by for example Ellison and Boyd, 2013, p. 162) that the influence users can exercise over the features of the technology are limited.

What can be done, however, is a “hacking” of existing features, in that just because a certain feature was meant to be used for one purpose does not mean users cannot re-appropriate it. Facebook, for example, offers the option to deactivate one’s account instead of deleting it completely, which is meant to give people extra time to consider if they really want to delete all of their stored data. Once the account is deactivated, other users cannot interact with the person on the platform. Ultimately, this means that the individual cannot be surprised by (inappropriate) posts about themselves on their timeline or non-requested tagging. As an example of a user hack, Ellison and Boyd (2013) mention a case of a teenager deactivating their account every day after logging on and browsing for a while. Facebook clearly did not intend the feature to be used like this, but people re-appropriate in the absence of better control mechanisms.

Fundamentally, this perspective asserts that the properties of a technology are the same, but what they afford differs for every individual (Leonardi, 2011, p. 153). Norman (1999) distinguishes real affordances (features, properties) and perceived affordances. He also highlights the difference between constraints (physical, logical and cultural) and affordances (Norman, 1999, p. 41). A crucial point raised by Leonardi (2011, p. 154) is the assumption that constraints are not set in stone and unchangeable but are rather something that could change over time. In the case of Facebook, one example would be the ability to search for friends by importing one’s address book stored on a mobile phone. I might perceive it as enabling to find the people I want to connect with, but just a couple of months later I might find it quite disturbing and constraining to be found by everyone who has my phone number.

Affordances in relation to social technologies

The material qualities of social technologies shape at least four affordances described by Treem and Leonardi (2012), namely visibility, editability, persistence and association. The authors describe them in an organisational context in which the use of the technology is sanctioned by the employer but those
affordances are still relevant, potentially to varying degrees, in the case of voluntary used public social technologies. Treem and Leonardi (2012) point out that most of the studies they used to assemble these affordances were conducted within IBM and that this poses certain limitations in regard to general conclusions drawn for the use of social technologies in organisations.

In the following I will outline how those affordances can potentially also be experienced when using public social technologies, and then I shall clarify which affordances are more relevant in this context. Firstly, Treem and Leonardi (2012, p. 150) describe visibility as an influential affordance, with social technologies ranking highly in relation to it. It describes the ease of accessing information and that contributions to knowledge or in terms of social capital are visible to members of the network.

The papers in our sample suggest that social media afford users the ability to make their behaviors, knowledge, preferences, and communication network connections that were once invisible (or at least very hard to see) visible to others in the organisation. Our notion of visibility is tied to the amount of effort people must expend to locate information. (Treem and Leonardi, 2012, p. 150)

As Treem and Leonardi (2012, p. 152) point out, the use of social technologies helps to share work across boundaries, which could happen even with public social technologies such as Facebook, but it probably takes another form than a corporate wiki. On a very basic level, Facebook, Ello, Twitter and LinkedIn connect people, and the gain for the individual is, firstly, facilitated communication with a broader group of people, and, secondly, easier access to personal and professional information. Once two people are connected (through friendship or following), all information is shared by default with the possibility of limiting access through the use of lists or filters.

On Facebook, employees working for the same NGO in different countries, or just peers with similar roles in the same industry, can easily create and join groups, in order to share knowledge or exchange experiences. Treem and Leonardi (2012, p. 152) also clarify the potential gains in regard to meta-knowledge about one’s co-workers – not just in regard to professional expertise, but also concerning interests, backgrounds and activities. This affordance is especially pronounced on Facebook, Twitter and different chat functions (e.g. GChat, Skype). By being connected with one’s co-workers, or being able to have a quick, informal chat either during or after work (this corresponds to the accidental coffee break while being more intimate), one acquires a tremendous amount of meta-knowledge about another person.

Treem and Leonardi (2012, p. 154) suggest that there is a tentative indication that the social technology use for professional purposes of one’s boss
might encourage employees to use it more as well. When considering public social technologies it is quite likely that employees connected with very active colleagues or bosses feel a greater pressure to also exploit this part of their social capital. As shown above, all three of these aspects can also be considered affordances for public social technologies that are used by the employees of an organisation: work behaviour is shared, meta-knowledge is acquired and practices are shared.

Secondly, Treem and Leonardi (2012, p. 155) add persistence as an affordance and describe it as

\[
\text{[c]ommunication [that] is persistent if it remains accessible in the same form as the original display after the actor has finished his or her presentation.}
\]

Information placed online does not disappear once the contributor has logged out, which creates a long and searchable record. By being searchable, and visualisable, this information can be re-contextualised and used at other times. This is particularly relevant for public social technologies like Facebook, Twitter (even though one needs to know what to search for) and LinkedIn, as information is regularly taken out of context, which subsequently puts a greater emphasis on people working out carefully what to post. Persistence also has the side-effect that something work-related can be posted on Facebook during one’s work day, but reactions to it do not stop just because the employee has gone home. The persistence of communication therefore helps to transcend traditional time boundaries.

Persistence also allows information or content to remain available and to be developed further over time (sustaining knowledge), which in turn contributes to the creation of robust forms of communication (Treem and Leonardi, 2012, p. 156f.). Once online, information is difficult to destroy or abandon, which has advantages especially for NGOs trying to expose corporate or governmental wrongdoings. The nearly unlimited storage accompanying this growing content has the drawback that the sheer amount of content can become unmanageable; a particularly good example in this regard would be Twitter, because once you have lost a Tweet out of sight, there is almost no finding it again.

The third affordance suggested by Treem and Leonardi (2012, p. 159) is editability, which

\[
\text{refers to the fact the individuals can spend a good deal of time and effort crafting and re-crafting a communicative act before it is viewed by others. (Treem and Leonardi, 2012, p. 159)}
\]

Asynchronicity allows the individual to craft a message with more consideration but also without considering their own non-verbal cues. Editability also
enables the correcting of mistakes at a later point in time, and even though this reduces part of the persistence/robustness of messages, most social technologies leave traces of either the original message (anything online will be found again/eventually) or the fact that the message has been edited.

Moreover, editability allows the individual to engage in a more sophisticated form of impression management (what personal information to share), to target information to a specific audience (Treem and Leonardi, 2012, p. 161) and to improve the overall quality of the information being shared. This works equally well for public social technologies, where people can engage in impression management (even though to a lesser degree, as Ellison and Boyd (2013) point out) and target an audience by either tagging people or limiting visibility.

Finally, association is the fourth affordance identified by Treem and Leonardi (2012, p. 162), which they define as

established connections between individuals, between individuals and content, or between an actor and a presentation.

The authors continue in this vein by explaining that the strength of the connections between people, namely social ties, is unclear in social technologies, since no visible distinction is made between close friends and acquaintances on these platforms (Treem and Leonardi, 2012, p. 162). Associations can also be visualised between an individual and a piece of information which gains relevance on public social technologies when considering the spread of links and data. For example, even though an individual might not have created a particular text or video, if they are always early in discovering information and spreading it, they strengthen their position in the network. Importantly, especially on networks like Facebook, Ello or Plague, the technology often suggests associations in the form of people or content that could be interesting (Treem and Leonardi, 2012, p. 163).

Vaast and Kaganer (2013), while describing policies as an organisation’s formal reaction to social technology, point to a third type of association, namely between the individual and their organisation. They also clarify that organisations – at least in their policies – seem to be a lot less concerned with the affordance of “editability” and mainly with the affordances “visibility” and “persistence.” As social technology allows one to make associations more explicit, people gain the opportunity not only to increase their social capital (Treem and Leonardi, 2012, p. 164), but also to form closer connections with their co-workers. Relevant information can be accessed more easily, and emergent connections between people/people and people/content are enabled (Treem and Leonardi, 2012, p. 165).

Vaast and Kaganer (2013) describe that one of the challenges with social
technologies for organisations is the fact that they are losing control over information technology and the applications used. An organisation has an intrinsic interest in controlling information and the work that is done, but social technologies are changing how the former is communicated and the latter conducted. The second main important difference to traditional communication technologies is that social technologies differ in that they afford all of these four communicative outcomes simultaneously, and consistently in an organizational setting. The potential presence of all four of these affordances may offer users greater flexibility in the ways that they employ these communication technologies and enact behaviors with them, which in turn could influence organizational communication processes. (Treem and Leonardi, 2012, p. 167)

Treem and Leonardi (2012, p. 173) also caution that those social technologies might afford more social exchanges than knowledge exchanges, but this is obviously the whole point of these public social technologies and therefore cannot be translated seamlessly from the organisational context on which the authors focus to the semi-personal and half-organisational context many employees experience through the use of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. It is telling that Vaast and Kaganer (2013, p. 83) found codes relating to the ‘blurring of personal/professional boundaries’ to be the most common, with 91% salience in their sample of 74 corporate policy documents. For Vaast and Kaganer (2013, p. 86), this is closely linked to the affordance of “association,” though I would argue that the blurring of boundaries is linked strongly to visibility and persistence and less so to editability, as argued above.

2.3.3 Enacting boundaries and social technology

The design of the present study, with interviews and online observations, provides access not only to the understanding constructed in a social context but also to the very individual experiences of my participants. The affordance perspective focuses on the material and social aspects of the co-construction of meaning and the environment, while sensemaking, or more precisely the enactment property of sensemaking, offers an opportunity to understand the individual aspects surrounding the construction of boundaries.

Maitlis and Christianson (2014, p. 58) provide a thorough review of the sensemaking literature and how it enables us to understand how people play a role in the co-construction of the very events they try to understand. They define sensemaking as
a process, prompted by violated expectations, that involves attending to and bracketing cues in the environment, creating intersubjective meaning through cycles of interpretation and action, and thereby enacting a more ordered environment from which further cues can be drawn. (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014, p. 67)

Furthermore, the authors focus intensely on the aspect of enactment when outlining the role of action in sensemaking. Actions provide cues for further sensemaking, they test provisional understanding and, more importantly, they shape the environment. Moreover, social technologies included in the present study disrupt certain routines and they change the way we do things and how we reason about boundaries and work. Weick (2001) clarifies that

[m]aterial artifacts set sensemaking processes in motion; sensemaking is constrained by actions, which themselves are constrained by artifacts; and sensemaking attempts to diagnose symptoms emitted by the technology. What we are trying to emphasize in recasting the concept of interactive complexity is that the increased mental workload created by new technologies forces people to impose more of their own interpretations to understand what is occurring. (Weick, 2001, p. 168)

sensemaking is used to study changes in circumstances that force people to take a step back, make sense of what is happening and enact their environment. Changes often violate the expectations of individuals, in the case of social technologies, they change our boundaries of availability and they change what is considered to be work. People try to rationalise what they experience and do, and this intricate entanglement of action and structure creating and reinforcing one another is highly suitable to understanding the relationship between boundary work and technology.

Weick (1995) suggests seven properties of sensemaking for delimiting the phenomenon. sensemaking is grounded in identity construction, retrospective, enactive of sensible environments, social, ongoing, focused on and by extracted cues, and driven by plausibility rather than accuracy Weick (1995, p. 17). Not all seven properties are equally relevant for the present study, but this does not imply any disagreement with Weick’s reasoning. sensemaking and Weick’s seven properties have received criticism, for example by Munro and Huber (2012, p. 538), pointing out that the focus on plausibility limits the usefulness of the perspective for analysing complex cases. In a way, Weick (1995) addresses this shortcoming when summarising that

accuracy is meaningless when used to describe a filtered sense of the present, linked with a reconstruction of the past, that has been edited in hindsight. (Weick, 1995, p. 57)
Weber and Glynn (2006) point out that the institutional context is not sufficiently considered from the sensemaking perspective, but the authors conclude that there is room for it and sensemaking does not per se exclude at least considering the institutional context. Finally, Brown et al. (2008) point out how people have very different understandings of reality, but in research we too often end up with just one narrative. If we instead focus on disagreements and ambiguities, we might better understand how organising really happens. Lockett et al. (2013) provide a very good example of a study in which the context and the social position of the individual are taken into account. The individual’s sensemaking is very much influenced not only by their position in the organisation, but also in the wider institutional context.

Weick (1995) summarises the whole sensemaking process beautifully in the following sentence:

Once people begin to act (enactment), they generate tangible outcomes (cues) in some context (social), and this helps them discover (retrospect) what is occurring (ongoing), what needs to be explained (plausibility), and what should be done next (identity enhancement). (Weick, 1995, p. 55)

Even though the seven properties of sensemaking are closely interlinked, mutually influencing and “causing” each other, it is not necessary – and sometimes not possible – to find all seven properties, as the researcher is not “in the head” of the participant and not around her 24/7, either. As such, some properties might simply be less applicable in certain cases. Consequently, for the present study, I will focus exclusively on enactment as one of the seven properties that are part of the sensemaking process.

Enactment emphasises the active nature of sensemaking. According to Weick (1995), interpretation explains how people deal with existing entities (for example, texts), whereas sensemaking explains how the entities got there in the first place. In addition, enactment means creating part of the environment oneself is facing, which means there is nothing like “the environment,” as “the” would imply something singular and fixed and “environment” suggests that this thing is detached from the individual; Weick (1995) emphasises that this is not the case. This is in line with the fundamental idea of the affordance perspective, suggesting that the affordances one perceives are dependent on the person looking at a technological artefact – it is not the technology forcing the human to behave in a certain way, but the observable (temporary) outcome is the product of a negotiation between the human, the environment and the technological affordances.

The challenge with the enactment and the process aspects of sensemaking is the implied lack of a “result.” There cannot be a result if sensemaking and the
enactment of the environment are ongoing processes, meaning that there is just a certain moment in a process to which we can relate (Weick, 1995). Even what is described and concluded in this dissertation is temporary – it is contextual, because the moment we do something our sensemaking of it changes. When I meet another person, we are influencing each other just by meeting, and by meeting we then become different people (Follett, 1924, pp. 62-63). Following the argument that there is not one result but moments to which we relate, Follett (1924, pp. 62-63) suggests talking about ‘relatings’ instead of results. As an example she gives ‘resistance to organisational change’ and prefers to see it Follett (1924, pp. 120) as ‘confronting the environment’, which leaves the nature of the confrontation open; it could be opposition, but it does not have to be combat. A similar reasoning applies to technological change, in that people have to address it, but how they do it can take a variety of forms.

The idea of relatings means for my research that it is open as to how my participants relate to the possible changes social technologies bring about. As such, it leaves more room to discover how they make sense and reason instead of pre-supposing that it is all bad and they are incapable of adjusting (to) their environment. Enactment allows one to see people as active agents shaping part of their environment, which seems fitting, since people decide for themselves if they want to use certain technologies and to what extent. I am not denying the force of social or organisational pressure here, but people are not just passively receiving whatever is given to them – they are part of the creation of that environment.

Finally, some actions do not result in creation. Just because an action is abandoned, shortened or postponed, it does not mean that no meaning has been created, and so all of these “unfinished” actions are still meaningful and contribute to sensemaking (Weick, 1995, p. 37). An example in the case of my participants could be when they tell me about activists contacting them on Facebook after working hours, and they then decide after half-answering that this really is going too far and instead they answer the next morning. The interrupted action is used later on to make sense of what they perceive as intrusion, where they set boundaries and why they do it. With the help of this interrupted action they shape their environment, enact their environment. Acting and sensemaking are therefore tightly interlinked.

Duxbury et al. (2013, p. 4) used the concept of enactment in their study of Blackberry introduction, because ‘the act of adopting a smartphone produces structures, constraints and opportunities that were not there before adoption’, and therefore it offers a possible example of how the enactment aspect of sense-making can be understood.
2.4 Weaving together boundaries, affordances and enactment

In this chapter I have examined the research on boundary work and technology, why the affordance perspective helps to understand the varying outcomes of technological change and how the enactment part of sensemaking helps to understand the individual’s actions. Subsection 2.1.2 introduces the idea of boundary work and highlights a lack of research in regards to the role of social technologies for boundary work. We know that boundary strength, flexibility and blending influence how individuals construct their boundary work tactics. Given social technologies’ affordances of visibility, persistence, editability and association, it can be expected that a change in these boundary characteristics will occur. The ubiquitous nature of social technologies enables a change in boundary flexibility and blending as time and space become less clear demarcations of realms. Additionally, the human aspect of boundary crossing (Clark, 2000) becomes a lot easier, as people do not need to go somewhere in person to cross from one realm into another but instead just log on to Facebook and write on their colleagues’ walls or access their employer’s page.

However, there is no consensus about the potential influence of (social) technologies on these boundary characteristics and the individual’s engagement with new opportunities. This indicates that an affordance perspective can help to understand the observed very different outcomes for different individuals. Affordances are perceived opportunities for action (Vaast and Kaganer, 2013), which helps to understand why people react differently – given their social context and capabilities, they might perceive and enact different affordances.

As established above, boundaries can be physical (spacial), temporal or mental. A social technology’s affordances, namely visibility, persistence, editability and association, have the capacity to challenge or even shape all three forms of boundaries, depending on the individual’s understanding and enactment. Consequently, the affordances the individual perceives shape said individual’s enactment of different boundary management tactics (behavioural, temporal, physical and communicative practices are suggested by Kreiner et al., 2009, p. 716f.).

We perceive different affordances, shape a certain environment, develop different understandings of what is appropriate and what is not and, consequently, use different tactics which shape our perception of other social technologies. As Mazmanian (2013) and also Barley et al. (2011) indicate, the social processes involved in understanding and making sense of a technology and its affordances are part of the reason why heterogeneous practices evolve even when homogeneous frames of references exist (Mazmanian, 2013, p. 1245).
I suggest that the boundary theory, seen through an affordance perspective, and the idea of enactment as a theoretical framework allow us to explore and understand how social technologies can shape boundaries and how people deal with these changes. In the following chapter the method of the present study, including philosophical reasoning, the design of the study, practical issues of the analysis and ethical considerations, is presented.
3. Methodology

In the next part, the methodology of the present study is presented. Firstly, general considerations regarding the aim of the study, suitable methods and the study’s underlying philosophical reasoning are discussed. Secondly, the empirical and methodological conclusions drawn from the pilot study are summarised. Thirdly, the design of the study, in relation to the level and units of analysis, is presented. Following on from this, I will elaborate on the methods for collecting and analysing empirical material, including the strengths and weaknesses of interviews and online observations for this particular study. Fifthly, the participants in this study will be presented as members of different kinds of groups belonging to a very particular sector. Subsequently, any ethical considerations concerning the participants, their organisations and the methods employed are discussed.

3.1 Philosophical reasoning

Throughout the text it has been my intention to clarify that I am ontologically allied with social constructivists. To answer the basic ontological question, “What is the nature of the phenomenon in question – the effects of social technologies on boundaries between work and private life – and what can we know about it?”, it is assumed that reality is local and specific, and so one should speak of realities. What is considered to be the reality in a certain situation is dependent on the individual or group of actors involved (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). For the present study this means that the understanding of the phenomenon is shaped by the participants and my interpretations, though in another context the effects of social technologies could be perceived differently. Secondly, the contextual reality is constructed (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 111), meaning that there is no outside “real” world or, in this case, no “real” effects that can be discovered and measured with the right means. Simultaneously, the existence of a physical world is not disputed.

Finally, reality is socially constructed, and its constructions are not technical or personal – as Dahlbom (1992) explains. Even though thinking is individual, it happens by taking the environment and other human beings into account; understanding and meaning are not developed individually but in re-
relationships with and the influence of others. For the present study this means that my participants are influenced by media reports about social technologies, by their colleagues and how they deal with these technological challenges and then probably also by me and what they think I know or assume about social technologies, NGOs and the national context.

I would like to emphasise again that the physical reality of subways, trees, offices, etc., in which that people live and work, is not contested or disputed, but through the meaning we develop and attach to things, the contextual reality is dependent and changes according to the social actors involved. It can also be explained by using the pairing of properties versus ideas, i.e. properties exist in a very tactile, haptic way, whereas ideas are socially constructed and can be changed depending on the circumstances and the actors involved. Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 37) summarise the socially constructed character of reality and add the aspect of inter-subjectivity as follows.

The reality of everyday life further presents itself to me as an intersubjective world, a world that I share with others. This intersubjectivity sharply differentiates everyday life from other realities of which I am conscious. I am alone in the world of my dreams, but I know that the world of everyday life is as real to others as it is to myself. Indeed, I cannot exist in everyday life without continually interacting and communicating with others. [...] Most importantly, I know that there is an ongoing correspondence between my meanings and their meanings in this world, that we share a common sense about its reality. (emphasis in the original)

Given that reality is situated and socially constructed in coordination with others (for social constructivists at least), the epistemological question regarding the relationship between the researcher (the person who wants to know something) and what can be known becomes tricky. If reality is socially constructed, then what can be known depends on the researcher’s values, assumptions and perceptions. Methodological considerations regarding how something can be found out collapse partly in the presence of epistemological considerations. If I subscribe to the perspective of constructivism, for instance, then what can be known depends on me, and consequently the methods I use, which therefore makes knowledge situated and contextual. The knowledge of culture, a society or a phenomenon is like a map: it can neither “be captured fully” nor “permanently,” as Gieryn (1999, p.11) points out.

Sensemaking, as proposed by Weick, is associated with the constructivist perspective, and he suggests ‘ontological oscillation’, suggesting that one should change one’s view depending on the situation (Weick, 1995, p. 35).
The especially long process of writing a doctoral dissertation gives ample opportunity to change one’s perspective and to make sure that the explanation offered is really the most suitable. The acknowledgement of the researcher’s involvement in the construction of knowledge is supported by the evolutionary perspective on the production of scientific knowledge as taken by Nowotny et al. (2001, p. 111), when they argue that ‘[c]onsequently it [science] increasingly forms part of the social reality it shapes’. There is no objective reality to discovery, but research shapes what can be discovered.

The existential phenomenology of Alfred Schütz supports interest in the life-world, i.e. the everyday experiences of participants. How a phenomenon unfolds depends not only on the individual, but also on the researcher’s assumptions and values. The focus of the inquiry is the phenomenon experienced by the individual on an everyday basis as opposed to the transcendental phenomenology for which a phenomenon comes to life in the consciousness of the individual. Schütz places great emphasis on reflexivity, as only this can lift any experience or incident out of the stream of consciousness and give it meaning (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 244). For Schütz, research should aim at understanding the world from the individual’s perspective, not from a detached observer’s viewpoint.

I argue that my participants’ sensemaking, communicated to me in our interviews, is a way of gaining insights to their life-worlds and their everyday experiences. By asking how they see it and what they do, I indirectly ask them to take a step back and explain and rationalise their views and behaviours for me. These insights are enriched by the online observations (I am following my participants on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) which give me a glimpse into their actual experiences. The online observations consist of language, but that is not the only interesting aspect to them. The screenshots taken of the observed instances have a certain material quality, a digital manifestation of the individual’s behaviour. I find that the observation of lived experiences helps tremendously to understand a phenomenon, not just through language and accounts, but also through actual behaviour and its observable outcome.

The question remains as to how I relate to the predicament that I want to know how my participants experience the changes social technologies bring to their understanding of work and boundaries whilst I also interpret what counts as work and what constitutes a boundary transgression. The concept of boundaries itself is distilled from how I understand my participants’ reasoning, as they did not give me a clear-cut definition such as ‘this is a boundary’. That by itself, however, indicates how difficult it can be for people to a) judge what activities are work, not paid for but still acceptable to do and b) judge how far it is their own desire and where social pressure starts.

Boundaries are not just set arbitrarily by the individual – certain boundaries
are established through social consensus. Overall, in the European context, it is not acceptable to just show up unannounced at a colleague’s house in the evening, to discuss the agenda for the next day’s meeting. The analogue private realm is relatively safe from the physical intrusion of work, but the same cannot be said of the digital private realm, where people working for NGOs receive friend requests from activists and colleagues or suggestions to spread work-related links pertinent to their organisation. The analogue’s equivalent would be your colleague showing up on your doorstep and suggesting you look at your photo albums and discuss your political opinions. Therefore, I argue there are certain “traditional” conventions, norms and customs when it comes to boundaries (like standard office hours of 9 till 5) that delimit work. It is my space on Facebook and Twitter, but it might become work space, and therefore digital boundaries might be contested or renegotiated in a social environment. Giddens (1984, p. 86) formulates this notion beautifully:

> [a]ll social interaction is situated interaction – situated in space and time. It can be understood as the fitful yet routinized occurrence of encounters, fading away in time and space, yet constantly reconstituted within different areas of time-space. (emphasis in the original)

When activities become routinised, they shape our social environment and co-create or reinforce structure. Activities undertaken by individuals create this structure, and this in turn sets expectations. However, as Giddens (1984, p. 176) points out, the pre-existence of a structure is also constraining, as it limits the options an individual has at any point in time (which relates back to the features and the perceived affordances of a technology). Giddens (1984, p. 174) clarifies that these structural constraints are accompanied by material constraints and constraints set by sanctions. The material constraints have been challenged and changed through new media that extends the bodily reach over the purely physical presence in any given situation. With these, sanctions also change; for example, if previously you were sanctioned for being late in the morning, you now might face sanctions for not dealing with tweets in a timely manner. These sanctions have the power to change the individual’s behaviour.

Relating back to the present study, this notion means that I use the idea of enacting the sensemaking perspective to gain insights into the everyday experiences of my participants and how they contribute to shaping their environment. This in turn makes it possible to explore the phenomenon in question and gain an understanding of how the participating NGO employees deal with the changes enabled by social technologies. Interviews and online observations create empirical material that allows one to understand (or for that matter gain one possible understanding thereof) the everyday experiences of participants.
Moreover, they let me participate in their sensemaking around the phenomenon of how social technologies affect their personal boundaries between work and private life – and how they deal with these accordingly.

3.2 Pilot study

As the phenomenon in question is relatively young, a pilot study seemed a suitable way to test certain assumptions derived from the literature and the methods I planned to use. Silverman (2010, p. 197) even claims that a ‘kind of piloting is a feature of most kinds of good research – both qualitative and quantitative’, as it allows one to test different styles of questions and to verify that the chosen methods are suitable. Therefore, six PhD students, living and working in Sweden, were interviewed, asked to keep a diary and followed online. PhD students were chosen in this instance, as their work is characterised by a significant amount of freedom and the almost constant use of technologies. The participants for this study were found through a mandatory course at the Management and Information Technology Research School in Sweden and from among my own colleagues. It is because of this physical proximity and my own status as a PhD student that the analysis of the interviews and diaries is influenced by observations.

The overarching question of the pilot study concerned the influence of social technologies on work/private life boundaries and the ways PhD students make sense of and cope with blurring boundaries. Similarly to the main study, a qualitative approach with interviews and online observations was used. I also trialled the suitability of participant diaries, albeit with limited success.

The term “diary” in this context refers to a record which documents what a participant does and thinks at certain points in time (Zimmerman and Wieder, 1977). The study took place between September and December 2011, and it resulted in six interviews and six diaries.

3.2.1 Empirical “takeaways”

Three main points can be concluded from the pilot study. Firstly, the PhD students in this study expressed a leaning toward seeing their PhD more as a lifestyle than a job, partly because they feel a strong sense of belonging and partly because they enjoy a great deal of freedom when it comes to the research topic, work time and space. Related similarities provided an argument for choosing NGOs as the empirical context of the main study. Overall, the PhD students in the pilot study expressed a clear sense of control over their boundaries in relation to other people and their work. To a certain degree, these are commonalities found in employees of NGOs, as they often work with
people with whom they share fundamental values, and therefore they might have an easier time connecting with them. Without exception, all of my NGO participants were passionate about what they worked with (some described it as a lifestyle, some were just really glad to work on something about which they cared deeply).

Two main differences between the two groups are the potentially greater urgency employees of NGOs might experience (no one is going to die if we do not publish this month but next) and the limits to their freedom in choosing working time and place. In some organisations, there is a certain freedom regarding working time and place, but this is rarely to the degree to which a lot of academics in Sweden experience it, for instance. This gives an indication that the work context, and their perspective on what work constitutes and what they might perceive as special about their kind of organisation, is relevant to understanding how boundaries are treated.

Secondly, control, as explained by Cohen et al. (2009), seems to be an influential factor for satisfaction in relation to the usage of technology and boundaries, and the same notion applies to wished-for distance or closeness in social relationships. When people do not feel in control they seem to perceive the blurring of boundaries rather as an intrusion that needs to be dealt with. The PhD students participating in this study demonstrated a fairly high degree of control and consciousness in regard to setting boundaries in a context that is carved by blurring boundaries, as they did not allow themselves to be overwhelmed but instead dealt steadfastly with any intrusions that may have occurred. What needs further examination is the relationship between the social context, technological affordances and the changing degree of availability. For the main study, the social environment needs more attention, especially in regard to explicitly or implicitly expressed expectations; moreover, the relationship between these expectations and technological affordances deserves further inquiry, and the degree of availability might just be one way of conceptualising boundaries.

Thirdly, the role of technology in relation to boundaries needs further investigation. The blurring of boundaries (alternatively, the increase or decrease of availability) was perceived differently, on a continuum ranging from negative to positive, by the participants in this study. Even though Ashforth et al. (2000) argue that role identification, situational strength and culture are influential factors for boundary creation, maintenance and crossing, the results of the pilot study suggest that technology should be added to these elements, as it enables people to blur boundaries much easier. Depending on the psychological position on the negative to positive continuum, this can be perceived either as intrusion or as a welcome addition. Technology also enables employees to reinforce boundaries, which indicates that technology by itself is neither
“good” nor “bad.” Furthermore, individuals appropriate it differently while simultaneously shaping the environment in which they live. This relationship between the shaping of the environment and the role of technology necessitates further investigation. As there is quite some variation in how the members of this relatively homogeneous group of PhD students use technologies to maintain and negotiate boundaries, it is also worth investigating the influence of the social environment on the usage of such platforms.

3.2.2 Methodological “takeaways”

Four of the interviews took place in two different Swedish universities, while the other two interviews were conducted using Skype. The interviews conducted over a distance demanded more time and more small talk before and in between, to create an atmosphere of trust. Physical proximity is not a prerequisite for a meaningful interview, but it does facilitate the development of trust and consequently “speeds up” the process. Sometimes Skype is the only reasonable option, but face-to-face seems preferable for a topic quite literally “close to home”.

The first lesson learnt from the pilot study concerned the advantages that arise from face-to-face interviews. Trust and rapport are established faster, and with this particular research topic it facilitates the gaining of deeper insights into the reasoning of people about boundaries and technology. An added obstacle to physical distance and the use of Skype is the potential malfunctioning of the technology, which happened quite regularly during the interviews for the main study due to connection problems.

Secondly, the study helped to assess the suitability of the diary method, among other things, and to suggest some improvements. The diary’s purpose is to document what participants do with different social technologies, why they do it and if they think about appropriateness. Clear instructions were given to them regarding the exact kind of information they were supposed to document.

Burgess (2006, p. 101) makes clear that although diaries kept for research purposes are indeed solicited, they are still private documents and a primary source of data. Consequently, he states that

[t]he diary provides a first-hand account of a situation to which a researcher may not have direct access. Secondly, it provides and “insider’s” account of a situation and, finally, complements the materials that are gathered through observation and interview by the researcher. (Burgess, 2006, p. 109)

Especially the first-hand nature of the information, and the ability to gain access to insights and situations that otherwise would be out of reach, renders the
diary method an extremely helpful addition to qualitative studies.

Conrath (1973, p. 590) states that they should require no more than five to ten minutes per day to complete, otherwise the reliability of the data is at risk. Apart from that, diaries are a very productive way of gathering data, as the participants are able to reflect more deeply relative to other methods and to describe things more extensively (Lewis et al., 2005). Furthermore, they add a real-life dimension with an immediacy between recording and the occurrence of an event, and they offer the opportunity for the participant to reflect upon their own behaviour (Lewis et al., 2005).

A very promising employment of the diary method can be found in Balogun and Johnson’s (2004) study of middle managers’ sensemaking. Two main differences can be identified. Firstly, their study was supported and sanctioned by top management of the firm, and the middle managers were encouraged to keep these diaries, and secondly, the authors followed up on the diaries on an almost daily basis. Neither of those characteristics was applied to my study, which might help to explain the rather limited gain from using the diaries. Therefore, the second lesson learnt from the pilot study is quite frankly to not use the diary method unless I can significantly improve on implementation and participant accessibility, for example in the form of a smartphone application.

Despite all the theoretically suggested and practically achieved advantages (see Balogun and Johnson, 2004) of diaries, the pilot study showed that the method needs significant adaptations in relation to technological advances. It seems that an interactive, mobile and easy-to-use “Diary 2.0” is needed. The pilot study also demonstrated that diaries are a difficult method to manage, as people need constant reminders and there is a risk that they will not see the point, which therefore renders entries more or less useless. For future studies an adaptation of the method could be considered, for example in the form of a smartphone application, but even then it would interrupt the individual’s day and take time. Any kind of deeper reflective question might be unsuitable for a diary kept for research purposes by busy professionals. Research outcomes that are far in the future, and very busy schedules, are not helping in the decision to use a diary method, because if people have to choose, the diary loses most likely more often than it wins against other things that have to be done.

My limited success with the diary method resulted in the decision not to use it for the main study with the NGO employees. I am still convinced that as a source of data it can provide us with fascinating insights and deep reflections, but a study with people pressed for time and without the strong endorsement of higher-level management does not seem to be the ideal research ground for this time-intensive method. It is definitely a great method, but I was not able to employ it in a beneficial way.
3.3 Research Design

A qualitative approach allows for the exploration of the processes and nuances involved in the phenomenon in question (Kreiner et al., 2009). The present study deals with questions concerning social technologies and boundaries on an individual level rather than on an organisational or societal level, and it seeks insights into the effects social technologies have on boundaries between work and private life – and how people handle these effects. Therefore, methods are used that give room to the individual to express their experiences and solutions.

The design of the study is guided by the two research questions. To understand how social technologies affect the blurring of boundaries between work and private life, and to deduce what the observable outcome online looks like (the first question), interviews and online observations are useful methods. The second question, regarding the tactics people employ to deal with these changing conditions, can best be answered by the individuals themselves through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and again, by observing their behaviour online.

Studying boundaries is preceded by the question of what is understood as boundary or boundary-blurring behaviour? Answers might vary from individual to individual, but a general orientation could be instances when typical temporal boundaries of work are ignored and/or violated. As social technologies are not spatially bounded, this could also open up opportunities for interruptions, which in turn could be perceived positively or negatively. The idea is to study how people make sense of the changes happening (interviews seem to be a solid way toward that end) and establish what these instances look like (online observations).

A fellow academic provided an enlightening, albeit involuntary, example when asked what he, a strong opponent of Facebook wearing a “Die, Facebook, die!” t-shirt to work, was doing on Facebook. Figure 3.1 shows his reaction, whereby he basically admits he surrendered for the sake of his work. Tommy Jensen consented to this post being used in my dissertation.

There are also role boundaries that could be challenged by activists or volunteers approaching an NGO employee on Facebook, when the employee sees that more as a personal space. Whether or not something is defined as an interruption, violation, extension or welcome addition is subjective and dependent on the permeability of the boundaries of the individual in question (Cohen et al., 2009). During the interviews I gained an understanding of the individual perspective, their preferred way of dealing with the connections between work and private life and potential challenges they have encountered. The online observations add the observable outcome of their attempts to realise what they
Contentment with boundaries in this context should not be misunderstood as “balance” or as some form of equal distribution of resources like time and effort. More or less no employee in any context will have the influence and power to distribute their time, effort and emotional involvement equally between work and non-work activities. Ransome (2007) suggests that it is very likely that at some stage in life imbalance will occur between not only partners, but also between different areas of life. Therefore, in this study, blurring by itself is not seen as necessarily negative or positive – the emphasis is on the contentment of the individual with the arrangements made (see Cohen et al. (2009).

Online observations, or a ‘netnography’ (Kozinets, 2010) in this context, allow for an additional layer of information and to gain a basic understanding of how exactly different areas of life can actually communicate with and affect each other through social technologies. In this study, they show what blurring can actually look like. Kozinets (2010, p. 56) suggests that even though a netnography offers access to naturally occurring data and is ‘entirely unobtrusive’, interviews give an idea of the individual’s perspective, and it is invaluable to get an impression of people’s reality online. Online observations offer insights into what people are confronted with online, which by no means negates their involvement in the creation of this environment – it simply offers an additional layer.

During the time of the study I watched numerous videos and read countless newspaper and magazine articles and blog posts about social technologies and the changes they are potentially bringing to the way we work. More or less all of them were of a rather speculative manner and often reflected the perspective of the author and their network more than any statistics. The value of these documents is rather particular, as it does not tell me much about what my participants think. They nevertheless are an important source of information about
the world in which my participants live. When we try to understand changes, we are not just inwardly considering our own feelings, but the sense-making process is driven by clues we extract from our environment. Our environment is not just colleagues, bosses and friends, but also the extended environment co-created and made accessible by the media. This environment influences how my participants reason about boundaries and technology, as it offers clues as to how others deal with it and what is acceptable and desirable.

3.3.1 Level of analysis and unit of observation

As mentioned earlier, the focus of this study is on individuals and their experiences, both of which help to understand the phenomenon of the interplay between social technologies and boundaries. The unit of observation is therefore the individual.

Employees of non-governmental organisations are not entirely unlike the priest in Kreiner et al.’s (2009) study, in that they are rather extreme in the demands that are placed upon them in terms of availability, albeit for different reasons than those for the priests, i.e. NGOs have a shortage of resources, which is not quite the same for priests in Western countries. A common point between priests and many NGO employees, however, is the demand on their emotional capacity, as both cohorts face emotionally exhausting situations or issues on a fairly regular basis. For the priests it might be a recent death in their parish, while for the NGO employee it might involve atrocities witnessed in a war zone or a report about the further attack on a protection-worthy site.

Extreme cases, as reasoned by Kreiner et al. (2009, p. 707), using Eisenhardt (1989) as support, are ‘often tremendously helpful for building or elaborating theory since their dynamics tend to be highly visible, bringing into sharper focus the processes that can exist in other contexts’. Pettigrew (1990) deems extreme cases as valuable when researching change, which is the case for the present dissertation focusing on technological change.

The participants in this study do not all belong to one organisation, nor do they all live or work in the same geographical area. They do not belong to one particular demographic group but span a wide spectrum, from age 25 to age 58, with the majority being between 28 and 45. It needs to be clarified that these people are not just young adults who love their job, so it cannot be assumed that they are representative of all NGO employees or a particular demographic (e.g. Millennials). Nevertheless, all individuals belong to the rather particular social context of non-governmental organisations, which is the connecting factor in this research. Consequently, this study focuses on a micro level of analysis.
3.3.2 My participants

Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. I employed a combination of directly approaching organisations, to gain access to their employees (which resulted in purposeful sampling, as I clearly stated what the research topic was and what kind of employees I was looking for), and the snowball sampling method, i.e. asking interviewees if they might know others who have had experiences with the phenomenon studied. After an interview a participant has an idea what the study is all about and can better assess what people in their huge network are suited to help me understand the phenomenon. Atkinson and Flint (2001) points out how the snowball sampling method can be used to gain access to hard-to-reach populations, and even though I do not want to suggest that NGO employees are overly hard to reach, the snowball sampling method has the advantage that the researcher gains access to people that can actually help to shed light on a particular question. Criticisms concerning a lack of representativeness and selection bias are exactly the things that make the method suited for qualitative, exploratory studies.

The selection of participants was done according to their level of active usage of a diverse set of technologies. Not all of them used all the available online networks, nor did all of them own or use a smartphone. However, a certain openness towards those new technologies was a basic requirement. I included two people that had very restrictive use of social technologies, to gain a better understanding of the importance of the context as opposed to technological capabilities. Age is not used herein as an indicator, as even people born as ‘digital natives’ (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008; Vodanovich et al., 2010) do not necessarily use or see any value in social technologies. At the moment, there is also no need to distinguish according to gender, as research about social technologies gives no indication that usage itself is dependent on gender, though it might become a relevant variable in future quantitative endeavours.

Overall, the participants covered a wide range of organisations and positions. The organisations represented can be divided into operational and advocacy, following the World Bank guide (Malena, 1995), with some being involved in both kinds of activities. Operational NGOs primarily design and implement development-related projects. The focus is on action in the broadest sense, which includes but is not limited to providing relief in disaster zones, local initiatives to mitigate hardship and raising standards of living. Some organisations also work with disadvantaged groups in Western countries. Advocacy NGOs, for instance, focus primarily on defending or promoting a specific cause, often aiming to influence politicians but also the broader public and through raised awareness international organisations (Malena, 1995). In this sample, 20 of the participants worked for an advocacy organisation, seven for...
an operational NGO and six for an NGO engaged in both activities.

The participants of this study covered a wide variety of positions within different organisations. Some worked at the forefront of planning and executing activities, some lived and worked in war zones, some lobbied politicians, some worked directly with volunteers (all of them worked with volunteers, but for some it was more fundamental to their role), and finally, I interviewed individuals that worked in administrative and technical support for their organisations. In Table 3.1, an overview of the participants, complete with information regarding their organisation, position and personal situation, can be found.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Year of birth</th>
<th>Living arrangement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Isabel</td>
<td>Campaigner</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>IT Administrator</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Living independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>Office development</td>
<td>Copenhagen, office</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Shared custody for child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Marcus</td>
<td>Campaigner</td>
<td>Oslo, office</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Partnership, child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Ida</td>
<td>HR manager</td>
<td>Hamburg, office</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Living independently, adult child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Clara</td>
<td>Web manager</td>
<td>Hamburg, office</td>
<td>German</td>
<td></td>
<td>Living independently, partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Ebba</td>
<td>Fund-raising</td>
<td>Hamburg, café</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>ca. 1978</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>Campaigner</td>
<td>Hamburg, office</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>ca. 1958</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Calvin</td>
<td>HR assistant</td>
<td>Hamburg, office</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>ca. 1975</td>
<td>Partnership, children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Controlling</td>
<td>Hamburg, office</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>ca. 1982</td>
<td>Living independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Advocacy officer</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Partnership, children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Alias</td>
<td>Job</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Year of birth</td>
<td>Living arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Lobbying coordinator</td>
<td>Stockholm, café</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Partnership, child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>Activist coordinator</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Shared custody for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy and</td>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Siri</td>
<td>Outreach manager</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>ca. 1985</td>
<td>Living independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Molly</td>
<td>Key account manager</td>
<td>Stockholm, café</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>ca. 1974</td>
<td>Partnership, children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy and</td>
<td>Marlow</td>
<td>Web manager</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Shared custody for child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Parker</td>
<td>Delegate</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Nelly</td>
<td>Delegate</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>ca. 1976</td>
<td>Field, Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Aston</td>
<td>Delegate</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Danton</td>
<td>Delegate</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>Hamburg, office</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>ca. 1975</td>
<td>Shared custody for child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Arthur</td>
<td>Office manager</td>
<td>Oslo, café</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>Communications manager</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Shared custody for child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Alias</td>
<td>Job</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Year of birth</td>
<td>Living arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>Director for international affairs</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy and operational</td>
<td>Marilyn</td>
<td>Digital manager</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>ca. 1974</td>
<td>Partnership, children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Heli</td>
<td>Environment monitoring</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Partnership, children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Negotiations coordinator</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Environment monitoring</td>
<td>Stockholm, office</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Tanja</td>
<td>Project leader</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Living independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy and operational</td>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Office manager</td>
<td>Stockholm, SBS</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Living in a community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy and operational</td>
<td>Kathryn</td>
<td>International programs director</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Partnership, child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy and operational</td>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>HR manager</td>
<td>Hamburg, office</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Partnership, adult children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Participants and their organisations
3.4 Collection and analysis of empirical material

As mentioned before, two different kinds of empirical material are used for this study, namely interviews and online observations. The online observations (conducted over a two-and-a-half-year period) are further divided into the two platforms with which the study is concerned – Facebook and Twitter. LinkedIn served, similarly to the videos and articles referred to earlier, mainly as background information. Murthy (2008, p. 842) points out how online methods gave her more intimate responses, but she suggests that a combination of online and offline methods might be most beneficial. In the following parts I will elaborate on how the two kinds of material were collected and subsequently analysed.

3.4.1 Interviews

As already introduced above, this study is situated in the social constructivist paradigm. Silverman (2007, p. 44) points out that seemingly private matters like our thoughts can become ‘social and structural’ through interviews. By asking questions, researchers trigger thoughts and reactions and to a certain degree guide the interviewee. The interviews conducted for the present study are no exception, as I did attempt to minimise guiding questions, but the topic (boundaries between work and private life) came with connotations and, depending on one’s own position, with strong emotions. Nevertheless, even Silverman (2007, p. 54) admits that interviews can be a valuable source of information.

If we want to know about people’s experiences, we naturally ask people. As Taylor and Bogdan (1984, p. 77) clarify, there are different kinds of interviews (opinion polls, questionnaires), but I employed in-depth qualitative interviews to understand my participants’ ‘perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words’. Not surprisingly, the interviews were relatively open, in order to enable the participants to actually express their own perspectives.

As it is important to allow participants to express their own ideas, reasoning and approaches freely regarding boundaries between work and private life, a rather open interview guide should allow for the necessary room for the individual. Alvesson (2003) suggests three different kinds of interviews – neopositivist, romantic and pragmatic – and clearly favours the latter. I see interviews neither as an objective source for knowledge (neopositivist) nor as a means of accessing the inner world of the interviewee (romantic, even though I am looking to gain an understanding of the everyday experiences of the individual. Instead, I use interviews in a pragmatic and reflexive way (as sug-
gested by Alvesson, 2003), seeing them as situational and questioning initial assumptions throughout the process. Interviews enable me to understand my participants’ perspectives, but they offer no direct way to their inner thoughts; nonetheless, they do offer a deeper understanding of the perspective of the individual, and especially for a relatively new phenomenon, they are an invaluable resource.

The interviews were structured around three overarching themes concerning the participants’ use of different technologies, their relationships with other people and their understanding of work and working for an NGO. As the participants raised interesting points or dilemmas, I included questions directed at those in the following interviews. I began the interviews by asking what the participant worked with and what technologies they used. Every participant was asked to describe in detail one typical day, from waking up (how? when? what happens immediately after?) to going to sleep, with a focus on their use of technologies. During this part, especially but also during the rest of the interview, elaborations and digressions were encouraged, in order to facilitate reflections on their practices and perceptions.

Further questions included during the interviews concerned the idea of connecting and disconnecting from work as well as technology. Does disconnecting happen at all? How/when/why does it happen? Does technology enable or inhibit connecting or disconnecting? Do you encounter any difficulties? As a concluding question for the three main topics addressed, I asked the participants if they would like to change anything in regard to their usage, their behaviour or their work. The final question of the interview asked if I had not managed to to ask anything, and surprisingly enough this question turned out to be one of the most helpful in gaining an insight into people’s reasoning around boundaries and technology.

We addressed how technologies helped or hindered their work and communication with their colleagues, as well as any changes they would like to implement or see. When talking about personal relationships I asked about contact during the day and if they would like to change anything about the way they maintain relationships.

For the main study, I conducted 33 interviews, lasting between 45 minutes and 150 minutes. In most cases the interviews were conducted at the workplace of the participant, except for two that took place in coffee shops, one at Stockholm University and six that were conducted via Skype. Two Skype interviews took place while the interviewee was at her physical workplace, and four were conducted while the individual was at home. Face-to-face interviews are generally preferred, but certain interviewees could not be met personally without placing unreasonable demands on financial investment. All interviews were conducted between February 2012 and May 2013. Throughout the dis-
sertation all quotes are in English, and they were translated with the help of native speakers. Identifying information is left out or substituted with general terms, but this is always clearly indicated.

The interviews were conducted in three different languages, and in general in the native language of the participant, if possible. For the pilot study with the PhD candidates, and for some interviews in the present study, I used English as the interview language when I was not in command of the participants’ native language. Comparing these interviews with those conducted in the participants’ native language, I conclude that the native language interviews are more detailed in their descriptions. However, the different languages also allow one to see the phenomenon from different perspectives. A very good example is the introduction of the difference between “private and personal” by one of my Swedish-speaking participants. Even though those two words exist in German, most people would use them interchangeably in this context. By being made aware of the difference in one of the Swedish interviews, I could use this knowledge to ask my German-speaking participants to consider if it had any relevance for them.

Asking for clarification for Swedish expressions from time to time does not impair a conversation as much as expected. My participants usually started off by speaking slightly slower and by using fewer colloquial expressions, but they always forgot about it after about five to ten minutes. Therefore, I can conclude that using the native language of the interviewee, at least for the present study, had significant advantages.

3.4.2 Online observations

Method books often treat digital methods rather warily, and a lot of studies are covert rather than overt (Murthy, 2008) (even though that might change with the decrease in online privacy), as researchers lurk in the background and do not always ask for consent (Murthy, 2008). Ethnographies are often used for observing a particular group of people (Coleman, 2010), and so following this tradition, digital ethnographies or netnographies are employed. In the present study, this group of cohort is peopled by NGO employees, and all of them either come from or are situated in a Western context. Even though they do not all work for the same organisation they all use the same online space. If in traditional ethnographies in organisational studies the common denominator is the organisation, for netnographies it is the digital space; instead of the organisation being the space in which a phenomenon is studied, in netnographies the space in this regards is simply digital.

My experience with the “netnography” method is the development of a certain closeness to my participants. By being connected, sharing and inter-
acting on Facebook and Twitter, I not only developed a better understanding of my participants and their values, but I also started to appreciate them as fellow human beings. This is in line what could be expected from a traditional ethnography.

The result of a traditional ethnography would usually be stories and rich, descriptive data. The result of this netnography is not stories but screenshots, material on a screen. I observed real-life data generation, I observed things more or less while they happened and at the same time had a digital manifestation outlast the event. The starting point is similar for both kinds of ethnographies for real-life data while it happens, whereas the result is different with stories in the case of traditional ethnographies and screenshots for this netnography. Similar is also the closeness that is developed with the context and the people I observed.

Coleman (2010) questions convincingly Castells’ (1996) idea of a “network society” and the evening out of the playing field (is the playing field really evening out, or do we just see another form of social reproduction?). Related to this critique, Coleman (2010, p. 491) clarifies that ‘these are the small but necessary details that render the materiality of media (and hence its particular affordances and constraints) not only heterogeneous but fully cultural, social, and above all, political’. Similarly, Murthy (2008, p. 840) asserts that the internet is not a neutral space but is biased by agendas and norms, which indicates clearly that perceived affordances are not the same for everyone but are very much dependent on the social and cultural context of the individual.

I am “Facebook friends” with 17 out of 33 participants, I follow 18 of them on Twitter and a LinkedIn connection was established with 16. Not all 17 contributed examples to chapter 6 – two participants posted things that would have been impossible to anonymise, one posted just too little on any kind of measure, one was befriended at a later stage, and her posts generally repeated what I discovered in others’ profiles (which indicates a degree of theoretical saturation), and one simply did not agree to have her posts used. Overall, after multiple sorting, I eventually had 2,374 instances available for analysis, after which I translated and anonymised 92 of the instances – a significant proportion of which are used in chapter 6.

I connected to each of the three platforms using my own, personal profiles. I used this approach for two main reasons. Firstly, receiving a friend or a connection request from a random profile on either Facebook or LinkedIn is usually an easy reject, in that it is creepy and not very trustworthy. Secondly, using a dedicated profile would decrease the possibility for anonymity, as everyone connected with me would by a participant. Even though the list of friends/connections can be hidden on both platforms, it would still be an utterly pointless profile with not much to look at. Baltar and Brunet (2012) find
in their study (which uses snowball sampling) on Facebook that the virtual response rate is higher than when using traditional snowball techniques. As a possible reason they suggest that there is more trust in the researcher, as they are disclosing personal information on their own profiles. In my case my participants gained access to all parts of my profile and all posts. Consequently, they had the chance to gain a solid understanding of my interests and opinions, which potentially created a certain amount of trust.

During the three years I was connected with my participants, I used all three platforms regularly: Facebook on a daily basis, Twitter a couple of times a week and LinkedIn about every two weeks. Occasionally, I filtered my Facebook news feed, to see my participants’ updates only, but after a while this became obsolete, as Facebook’s algorithms filter a person’s news feed according to interaction frequency, and my participants became the people with whom I interacted most. This is not the case for Twitter, where no filter is employed by the platform and updates are shown indiscriminately according to recency.

The analysis itself is processual in character, as it is iterative and was ongoing over a long period of time. I asked my participants to connect with me on Facebook and at a later stage LinkedIn, usually after the interview. Consequently, the number of NGO employees on my Facebook increased gradually. Initially, I was not quite sure if there was anything to be found at all – they were quite different, they worked for different organisations and they had varied posting behaviours. However, after a little while of being connected with them on Facebook and Twitter, a pattern emerged. This is when I realised that this might actually help to understand how online boundaries are manifested and transgressed.

I went back in time on my participants’ Facebook profiles to search for a presentation of the pattern I identified. Once I was sure there was something to write about, I asked them one by one (using Facebook’s messaging system) if they would allow me to use their posts – in a strictly anonymised format – for my dissertation. The analysis part of this thesis contains exclusive posts from consenting participants; however, even the ones that did not consent, and those that are not included for other reasons, have informed my understanding.

It could be argued that the online connections with my participants and the reading and following of what they present is the actual netnography, the online observation of the behaviour of a certain group of people in a particular realm. The screenshots are really just a physical manifestation to make these observations accessible and endurable. They are like pictures taken in the field meant to capture a moment, an occurrence. When gathering the screenshots from the online observations I used a very methodical approach. I went through the list of names of the participants that had agreed to “donate” information about their online behaviour one by one, and then I used Facebook’s timeline sort-
ing function, in January 2012, to go through all of the posts until July 2014, to find what was work-related and to take a screenshot of those posts, where necessary.

There are certain options for capturing Facebook data in a more efficient way than my person-by-person timeline-scrolling. NVivo now offers an add-on for the Chrome browser to capture screenshots and import them directly into NVivo, which might reduce the amount of steps necessary, but it is at least at the moment not a viable option for large amounts of screenshots, as they simply crash the program when trying to import them. There are further tools that can be used to automatically scrape Facebook data (with the consent of the person whose data is being scraped), though this method is more suitable for quantitative approaches such as, for example, counting the amount of posts with positive and respectively negative wording. Automatic data scraping is unsuitable for qualitative approaches when the kind of information searched for is extremely varied and not clearly defined.

Even though online observations could be considered as naturally occurring data (it would be there even if the researcher was not), I side with Silverman (2007, p. 45) when he argues that ‘[n]o data are “untouched by the researcher’s hands”’. I asked my participants to connect, which marks the first moment of my intrusion, and then I asked for their informed consent, which constitutes the second moment of calling my presence into their minds.

I did not ask for consent to observe my participants on Twitter and use that data, since I do not take the stance that just because it is legal, it should be done and consent is unnecessary. Rather, I assessed the amount of particular examples I could use (very few, due to the public search function), in how far they were personal as compared to general statements used in the text, and the fact that all of the participants had the option to read chapter 6 and provide comments if they wished for things to be removed. All information referred to from Twitter is very general and not at all personal or person-specific, so no explicit consent was asked for.

Online observations pose certain challenges when it comes to making them accessible to codification. On Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn my participants were sorted into specific lists so that I could easily filter my news feed. Screenshots were taken, but when using them in this study they were transformed into text and anonymised. In the analysis, the source (interview or online observation) is clearly indicated. As mentioned previously, not all participants connected with me on Facebook or LinkedIn, and not everyone had a Twitter account. This is in itself an interesting observation, as there are a few possible reasons: either they simply did not like me personally, they were connected with just a very intimate circle of friends or they felt that as a researcher I would be intruding into their private sphere. It also opens up assumptions
that for them the organisation does not come before their own personal good. Spreading the ideas and the actions of their organisation is not prioritised over their own need to connect more intimately or to compromise their own social capital.

Netnography contributes to method development by using social technologies for data collection. This is not the first study to utilise social technologies for data collection, as Larsson and Moe (2012) exemplifies, but so far it is the first to use Facebook to such an extent and with access that is so personal. Studies conducted or endorsed by Facebook naturally use large-scale anonymised data that do not give access to the level of detail required to understand the blending together of the two spheres of work and private life.

3.4.3 Data analysis

The analysis of the material did not happen over a predefined period of a couple of weeks but was an ongoing process. The first stage happened during and directly after the interview, when notes were taken (inspiration from Stjernberg, 2006), and these often reflected extraordinary instances or deviations from expectations. After the interviews, audio recordings were transcribed and filed within the NVivo project. Other materials were added under matching categories.

Prior to the first stage of coding, I read through all of interviews again, to gain an overview of the emerging themes. I used a three-step coding process for the interview transcriptions that is very iterative. During the first phase, the interviews were coded (the codes are very close to the actual wording chosen by the participants), and these were compared to the literature. In the second phase the codes were adjusted (merged or taken apart) and overarching categories developed. The material and the literature were used in a dialogue to find the most prominent attributes of the phenomenon under investigation. In a third stage, I went through all of the codes again, to assure internal consistency and to fine-tune the coding, where necessary. All codes that were not entirely suitable were moved. For certain codes, such as for example “expectations” and “boundary-blurring,” I introduced a more fine-grained coding structure, to capture the subtleties more adequately. Table 3.2 gives an overview of the progression of the coding scheme.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First round of coding</th>
<th>Overarching categories</th>
<th>Second round of coding</th>
<th>Third round of coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries for gaining distance</td>
<td>Boundaries</td>
<td>Boundary – blurring</td>
<td>Justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference between private and personal</td>
<td>Boundary – lack of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disconnecting</td>
<td>Boundary – enactment</td>
<td>Disconnecting from work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disconnecting as hardship</td>
<td></td>
<td>Time boundaries - access restriction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance through technology use</td>
<td>Separating platforms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enacting boundaries</td>
<td>Mental distinction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources inhibits boundaries</td>
<td>Using the technology’s affordances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixing work and private life</td>
<td>No social media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not disconnecting is not a problem</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Censorship</td>
<td>Benefit of the individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy and relevance on Facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Benefit of the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saving the world</td>
<td>Control – lack of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media is bridging different worlds</td>
<td>Control – strategies for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media is increasing your social capital</td>
<td>Control – wish for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media is lowering the social barrier</td>
<td></td>
<td>No work – life balance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social technology enables communication</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First round of coding</td>
<td>Overarching categories</td>
<td>Second round of coding</td>
<td>Third round of coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much of the organisation</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is work</td>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>NGO work – emotionally exhausting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When technology becomes a burden</td>
<td></td>
<td>NGO world is small</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When work is exhausting you</td>
<td></td>
<td>Peculiarities with NGO life</td>
<td>Place of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work can reach me all the time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cause of the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work has an impact on relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on social platforms</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Disconnecting from technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working at non-work times</td>
<td></td>
<td>Technology – constraining</td>
<td>Interpersonal level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working overtime</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feature level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working while commuting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Technology – enabling</td>
<td>Interpersonal level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Technology – hierarchy thereof</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The human aspect</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>A normal working day</td>
<td>Source for development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First round of coding</td>
<td>Overarching categories</td>
<td>Second round of coding</td>
<td>Third round of coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Source for meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Source of income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What they do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.2:** An overview of code development
When a participant talked about her peers being very active on Twitter and how she admired them because they were so good at their job, I initially coded that as “the human factor,” but eventually it became clear that this was part of the “expectations” an NGO employee faces. Similarly, “boundary blurring” includes examples of space, time or interpersonal boundaries that are blurred. In the final stage these were sorted in a fine-grained pattern.

NVivo is an extremely complex software package that allows one to analyse literally everything and nothing. NVivo allows basic things such as the counting of words or clustering according to certain keywords, but it is also helpful in searching for keywords in the text, for example “boundary,” “limitless,” or “grenzüberschreitend,” as this allows one to search for instances when the participants express these things explicitly. NVivo also offers a tremendous variety of analysis tools for language, written text, audio and video.

Some qualitative researchers (for example Professor Tommy Jensen at Stockholm Business School, who voiced his concerns during multiple seminars I attended) are still suspicious of using technology in the analysis stage of research, fearing that an alien logic might impose on their analytical process. As valid as that point might be, I argue that using any kind of technology in research still demands the human being to make the decision as to what should be coded, highlighted and counted. It is quite possible that the technology influences how we analyse, but so do markers and scissors, using a work processor, using a reference manager. There is no technology that does not change how we do things, but we are not mindless, passive receivers either. Ultimately, we make the decision, we code, we analyse. Silverman (2010, p. 254) furthermore points to important advantages, especially when using certain programs to analyse data. He argues that we can handle larger volumes of data at a much faster pace, an increase in rigour can be achieved because results no longer need to rely on anecdotes but the whole dataset can be searched relatively easily and, finally, team research is greatly facilitated.

For me, personally, NVivo software facilitates the finding of implicit expressions for boundary crossing or unconscious boundary enforcement, due to the possibility of the multi-layered structuring of material. Parts of the text can be marked and linked to “memos” that give room for notes and more elaborate considerations. Later on, during another interview when a similar explanation surfaced, both were linked to the same memo and it became easier to make sense of those difficult-to-grasp instances. As an example I would like to refer to the presence of a daughter of one of my participants on Facebook. I could tell that this had some limiting influence, but it was not explicit, and on the first coding I could not quite place the instance. Later on, I saw other participants who had relatives on Facebook, and they give a helpful explanation, so I was able to go back and understand and contextualise that particular instance.
The observations were analysed differently after multiple, fruitless attempts to import roughly 2,500 Facebook screenshots into NVivo. First of all, I followed my participants for two-and-a-half years, and it was not clear initially what exactly I was looking for or what I might find (if anything at all). Once I identified a pattern (after about 18 months), I went through the profiles of my participants very methodically and took screenshots of work-related posts. I then sorted them according to person and years and went through each folder multiple times to understand the differences in the posts and to see if there were differences between people. Once I had very clear and detailed descriptions of the three categories, I sorted all 2000+ screenshots into category sub-folders for each person and year.

For Twitter I refrained from taking extensive amounts of screenshots, and instead I went through every single profile by employing the search function (searching for all potentially work-related terms for each person) and then wrote memos about their Twitter personas. If I did not understand a sudden change, I Googled the person, which is how I discovered that one of my participants had died unexpectedly. In Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3, two examples of typical employee-instigated and employer-sanctioned tweets can be found.

![Figure 3.2: A Twitter example of an employee-instigated post](image)

### 3.5 Ethical considerations

This study was conducted over the course of almost three years, and it is important to consider the different methods used and in how far they might have ethical limitations. For the overall assessment of the ethical dimension of this study I used the ethics guide published by Vetenskapsrådet in 2012 concerning informing participants about the study, asking for informed consent, providing confidentiality and not using the information provided for other purposes (Vetenskapsrådet, 2012). The interviews were fairly straightforward, in that I asked for volunteers, and hopefully that is what I received. There is no indication that any of my participants were pressured by their organisation or me to participate. The majority of them even said they welcomed the opportunity to talk about issues relating to work/private life boundaries. As anonymity for them personally and their organisations is guaranteed, no future repercussions
Figure 3.3: A Twitter example of an employer-sanctioned post
are expected.

The online observations were different, as they lasted for two-and-a-half years, and unless they put me on a “restricted list” or blocked me completely on Facebook, it is unlikely that they could have controlled their behaviour online (with a researcher in mind) for such an extended period of time. It is therefore likely that I observed a wide spectrum of individual interests, opinions and personal posts. I asked them at the end of the period if I could use what I had observed to make sure that they had a chance to opt out (one of them opted out). I furthermore sent them the chapter about my online observations, to check if there was anything they wanted me to take out, as it might give away too much or it might be too personal. The online observations were restricted to posts related to work in one way or another – even though I observed personal posts, there was no benefit in sharing those.

Posts on Twitter (tweets) are public, and theoretically they could be used for research purposes, but using them as they are would jeopardise the promised anonymity, as the author could be searched for easily. Therefore, no tweets are used in their original language. With this discussion and the above-listed measures taken, I hope I have addressed the ethical concerns that this study poses.
4. Understanding work and life within an NGO

In the following chapter I will present my understanding – within the context of the study – of my participants’ perspectives on work and working for an NGO. I let them “speak,” though engagement with the material is facilitated by being sorted into overarching categories. The chapter starts with a brief description of the empirical context of the study, and this is followed by a presentation of my participants’ understanding of work. The chapter is then concluded with a closer examination of the particular nature of working for an NGO.

4.1 Empirical context

It seems appropriate to elaborate briefly on what is understood as an “NGO” in the present study and why this kind of organisation seems suitable for the aim of this research. The term “non-governmental organisation” was first introduced after the Second World War to classify ‘societal actors which are [...] international bodies and engage within the UN context’ (Martens, 2002, p. 271). Most attempts to define NGOs since then have been preoccupied with elaborating on what they are not, by using the method of disqualification. However, Martens (2002) suggests a very inclusive and conclusive definition of NGOs by focusing on all ideal-typical characteristics:

NGOs are formal (professionalized), independent societal organizations whose primary aim is to promote common goals at the national and international level. (Martens, 2002, p. 282)

Even though this definition is more “positive”, using a disqualifying method does have its advantages, as such a definition sets clearer limits and allows one to exclude certain organisations that might theoretically fit into the definition proposed by Martens but whose inclusion is difficult to justify on the grounds of the daily use of the term “NGO.” In short, I would like to add the attributes “non-profit making”, “non-violent” and “non-political,” meaning that they do not seek governmental power. Despite the fact that some organisations that work for the greater good use quasi-illegal means, for example Greenpeace, or
are borderline violent, like, for example, Sea Shepherd, their intention is not to harm other human beings which distinguishes them clearly from criminal or terrorist organisations.

No consensus exists regarding the number of NGOs currently in operation, partly because of the varying definitions used and partly as a result of a lack of official registers. Nonetheless, the United Nations Development Program estimates that there are about 40,000 worldwide, with hundreds of thousands of community-based organisations (Leverty, 2015), whereas the U.S. Department of State claims that 1.5 million NGOs operate in the United States alone (of State, 2012).

As mentioned above, NGOs can be divided into advocacy and operational organisations, with some being active in both areas. What struck me in the beginning, when I met my first participants, was the commitment and passion with which they spoke about the cause of their organisation. Later on, when I interviewed people working in war zones, I was still searching for the “why?” What makes some people choose that career path? And after five years, it still fascinates me. Williams (2014), in an episode of “The Why Factor” on BBC Television, let one woman who was helping during the Ebola outbreak in Nigeria explain what motivated her to risk her life:

I go partly because of my belief that there should be social justice in the world – that there should be some sort of equality. The people I’m helping are part of the human race, part of humanity – in that respect, all people for me are the same. I feel I have as much obligation to help a stranger as I do to help someone I know.
(Cokie Van Der Velde)

For the present study it is important to emphasise the idea of working for the “greater good,” as that is seen as a facilitating factor for increased intrinsic motivation; therefore, I include exclusively organisations that can give this extra layer of meaning, i.e. “good organisations.” This is an important element, as one of the underlying assumptions is that people are more willing to exploit all of the resources they have, including their personal social capital, if their organisation is contributing to the greater good and their intrinsic motivation is high.

Wrzesniewski (2003) suggests that any work can be seen as a calling – and therefore as an end in itself –, but whether someone sees their work as a calling or not is an individual choice. However, working to save starving children most probably helps in this respect. This does not mean that all NGO employees feel they are answering a calling, but my interviews with the participants in the present study indicate at least that it is widespread among that particular cohort of 33 people.
The NGO sector has received its fair share of criticism, starting with the far-ranging critique voiced by Peter Buffet regarding the fundamentally flawed idea of using capitalist principles to solve problems created by capitalism, and the ‘conscience laundering’ done by people who have accumulated obscene amounts of money without any hope of spending it before they die (Buffett, 2013). He criticises the increase of financial means in the sector while simultaneously global inequality is on the rise, implying that the NGO sector is not especially successful. At the same time, he acknowledges that the success or failure of projects cannot necessarily be measured by “ROI” (return on investment) (Buffett, 2013).

Buffet, however, is not alone in criticising the NGO sector. In a recent series of documentaries the BBC World Service questioned the accountability of NGOs and the appropriateness of their actions in the host countries in which they operate (Little, 2015b). Citing examples from India, Haiti and Malawi, they provide food for thought as to how far humanitarian aid can and should be coupled with human rights questions in the respective country, in how far foreign NGOs are causing a “brain drain” in the host countries and why so little has been achieved since the catastrophe in Haiti (Little, 2015a,b,c). As justified as this criticism may be, it does not directly influence the everyday experiences of NGO employees and shall therefore not receive any further consideration in this dissertation.

The empirical context for the present study, broadly speaking, is the not-for-profit sector. Vakil (1997) points out that some NGOs generate and distribute profits, but as this is not their primary organisational goal, it seems appropriate to speak of not-for-profit instead of non-profit, in order not to exclude those organisations from the group of NGOs. My personal experience is that people I have met in North America use the term “not-for-profit” and exhibit certain confusion as to what I mean when using “non-governmental organisations”. For many, this would include businesses, as they are fundamentally “non-governmental,” whereas it appears that there is a common understanding in Europe about the expression.

A distinction according to organisational principles between, for example, “grassroots membership associations” and “formal bureaucratic organisations,” or between “welfare organisations” and “social change organisations,” might be much more helpful for researching and understanding the sector and its inherent differences. Almost all organisations that participate in the present study can be characterised as grassroots membership associations, advocacy or social change organisations; however, most of the participants live and work in so-called developed countries.

Despite them working also for social change in other parts of the world, they still have to obey the rules and regulations of the countries in which they
are situated. Throughout the study I will refer to participating organisations in general terms as “non-governmental” despite the fact that some of them receive a certain amount of funding from different governments.

When talking about specific organisations, no names or identifying characteristics will be used, as anonymity is granted to protect the organisations and their members. The present study is not meant to expose any wrongdoings or criticise specific organisations – the aim is to understand the influence of social technologies on boundaries between work and private life. The context of NGOs was chosen because their employees expose a high level of commitment and intrinsic motivation, both of which might make them more likely to exploit all available resources for their organisation, including their own social capital.

Benz (2005) concluded in a study about job satisfaction in the U.S. and Great Britain that not-for-profit workers gain a particular form of satisfaction from their work that cannot be explained through either monetary compensation or fringe benefits. The findings also seem to be robust in relation to the individual heterogeneity between workers of not-for-profit and for-profit firms and the fact that not-for-profit firms are, at least in the datasets used for this study, concentrated in one industry (Benz, 2005). Even though Benz’s study focuses on not-for-profit organisations and not non-governmental organisations, certain similarities between them can be assumed, and therefore the results seem applicable even for NGOs.

Townsend (2000) compares administrative workers in performing arts with those in for-profit organisations. These two groups do not differ in regard to the value they attach to personal development, money or work more in general, but administrative workers in performing arts do differ, in that they attach greater value to work that contributes to the community.

### 4.2 What constitutes work for the participants in this study?

Understanding boundaries between two things or areas is dependent on comprehending what at least one of the two things is or means to the relevant person. If I want to understand boundaries and boundary drawing, the maintenance and the blurring between the two areas of work and private life, I need to understand what either work (from the perspective of my participants) or private life constitutes. I chose to ask them what work is for them, partly because it seems easier to demarcate (the question ‘What is private life?’ is usually followed by the answer, ‘Everything that is not work’) and partly also because this dissertation is written in the field of organisational studies, and so
asking about work seems more suitable. Overall, three main ideas about work emerged: it is seen as a source of income, as a source of meaning (closely connected to identification) and as a source for development.

One participant summarised these points succinctly when considering if his work was acceptable for him and in how far he was willing to compromise:

So that is, I think, some kind of triad I evaluate my jobs against. Does it satisfy my economic needs? Does it, is it intellectually stimulating? Is it something I can personally stand for? (Arthur)

Table 4.1 gives an overview of the three different ideas that emerged about work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source of income</td>
<td>‘Work is not just linked to pay. I work happily and I work a lot, but not necessarily for money. But we have to work for money’. (Clara)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning on an individual level</td>
<td>‘When you look at yourself in the morning in the mirror, you are proud of it’. (Aston)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I see myself or my work as an important part of my identity’. (Melissa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning on a social level</td>
<td>‘As many unemployed say, it feels like one is losing some kind of value in the eyes of society if one is unemployed and does not have that identity’. (Melissa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘It provides many social contacts’. (Holly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘But I would say now work is for me is the feeling of doing enough... honouring the agreement of being employed.” (Jacob)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning on an abstract level</td>
<td>‘I guess most people working for an NGO are proud of working for that. [...] So here I feel the motivation that I am doing something for the environment, for the world, for the future, for a better world’. (Matthew)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.1: Three ideas about work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Personal development        | ‘I do not think that I would not work if I won 20 million – I would continue working, because it is so much fun to work. But it might be because I see work, I demand things from work, partly because it is important for me, it is not just a source of income. I want to develop, I want to see that it is a challenge; otherwise, I get sad and bored’. (Jill)  
‘I do fun things and I am learning things. I couldn’t have a job where I didn’t learn things’. (Stella)                                                                                               |

4.2.1 Work as a source of income

Starting with probably the most obvious one, namely work as a source of income, it provides the opportunity to clarify that these ideas of “meaningful work” and “choice” very much represent a developed-world question.

[...] but if I was born here, you see, the country, in the poor countries, people, they aren’t thinking ”yeah, if I...”. That’s a very rich concept. Work is to... you have your children, millions of people cannot choose to work, they just have to work because otherwise they don’t survive. Of course I would work in a weapons company if I didn’t have another choice to help my family survive and have bread. (Aston)

We talked about work and what it meant for him, and when asked about working for a weapons manufacturer (which seemed to be a suitable example, given the cause of his organisation) he said that he could absolutely do that. My surprise triggered his explanation, and he continued by saying, ‘That is something that it’s only work, it’s not my life. Work is nothing compared to my life.’ (Aston). Work is a necessity, and if able to choose he would go for something meaningful that would allow him to grow personally and be proud, but when all is said and done, it is merely a means to an end. The interviewees did not judge people working for less desirable companies or organisations. One participant, for example, who had friends working for an oil and gas company and the immigration office, pointed out that the need to work prevents judgement.
I might discuss and debate with them and say that I think that their company does bad stuff, but I would not judge them on that, because a lot of them do good stuff and some at least try to compensate for the bad. (Jacob)

The understanding that people need to work for an income, and a lot might not be able to choose what they do, results in a rather prevalent feeling of gratefulness among the interviewees, in that they had managed to get a job at an organisation with which they shared values and ideas. Melissa summarised it neatly by explaining that she works for her organisation because she thinks it is a really important job they are doing: ‘I am lucky that I succeeded to get a job where I get paid to do something I did before in my free time.’ Similarly, Kathryn refers to the idea of privilege when she says that ‘I am quite privileged to have worked so far in jobs where I feel, where our mission is so big and important for me.’

In an attempt to make sense of the shifting circumstances and conditions for work, and his own attitude toward work reflecting a whenever/wherever approach, Jacob used the idea of honouring some kind of agreement with an employer.

It used to be easier, but since I started to work with social media it became kind of hard finding the exact distinction of that [what is work]. [...] But I would say now that work is, for me, is the feeling of doing enough... honouring the agreement of being employed. (Jacob)

Work is first and foremost a source of income, and people understand that others work at companies or organisations that they find rather despicable. Instead of counting hours, people try to do “enough” – they try to honour the agreement with their employer. Given their commitment to the values and the cause of their organisations, there is a smaller risk that they will work too little instead of working more than their contract demands.

Back to the initial question, i.e. what is work, at least for my participants this can be answered on two levels. The first one is the abstract level of “What is work in general?” and the second one is the very practical experience of work. Counting hours does not seem to be a suitable instrument for all of them to establish what counts as work and what does not, given the spread over different time zones for most organisations and working with activists or volunteers that naturally continue after their day jobs.

One way of tackling this question is to argue, as Kathryn does, that ‘I think it is, well, for me everything related to [the organisation] is work. However, I do not expect to get paid for everything, if you want to put it that way.’
Everything she does related to her organisation is work. It can be discussions, dinners, interactions through different kinds of social media – all of it is work, but not all of it is paid for (if one were to count hours or cite the 9 to 5 routine). In essence, wage labour is what you cannot say “no” to and what you do for your employer.

If I do wage labour, it is not my time. If my boss says I should do something, I have to do it. Luckily I have a good boss, who often asks me to do things I want to do, but in my free time no one can tell me what to do. (Joshua)

This leads to a distinction between wage labour and other kinds of work. Frank argues that ‘[w]age labour I can easily distinguish, but work in general I haven’t thought so much about, it is harder to define.’ Working with volunteers and activists, my participants do not just distinguish between wage labour and household labour, but they also add volunteer engagement to the list of different kinds of work, because they know how important it is for society. Tanja explains that ‘I think also that work is, the civil society, all voluntary engagement is invaluable work, and I think it should be seen as work. It is unpaid work.’ This leads to the following distinction between different kinds of work:

As I work a lot voluntarily, when I speak about work I talk about wage labour and voluntary engagement as two different things. And wage labour for me involves the things one does for a salary [... ] whereas voluntary work is work one does for an organisation, without getting paid for it. And then there is of course household work and those kinds that one does for their own benefit. (Joshua)

One possible differentiation some of the participants offered in an attempt to make their position clear to me is between what constitutes “work” and “job”: a job you do, work you engage with. Tessa, as one of the minority who had worked in the private sector previously, explained this distinction by referring back to her previous employer, who she left in order to do something meaningful.

[T]he word “work” has for me a greater intrinsic worth and it generates a value. In a job I do things to get them done. And I think this is the fundamental difference here; I work here because I generate a value and because, I say, I do this to further something. (Tessa)

Concluding, it can be said that the necessity of work as a source of income limits choice for many people, and even though my participants work
for organisations doing good, they do not judge. There are mainly three different kinds of work as seen by the interviewees, namely wage labour, voluntary work and household work. What falls into the category of wage labour is in one way fairly easily distinguished, i.e. everything one does for their organisation and one cannot refuse to do. On the other hand, not everything falls into the typical 9 to 5 time frame, and therefore not everything that is considered work is also paid for. This is not meant to be a comprehensive definition of “work” per se in an academic sense but rather a description of my participants’ experiences.

Work as a privilege

Closely connected to the realisation of work being a necessity for most people is also a deep-rooted appreciation for work as a privilege in a society that is strongly influenced by the protestant ideal that ascribes work an intrinsic worth. Holly starts off by saying ‘I think work in fact is a privilege’, and she continues by noting that she understands that people need to work for a living, but in that context it is even better if one has the opportunity to work with something oneself thinks is fun and important. She even refers to the possible detrimental effects of not being allowed or able to work, as it is such a huge aspect of the overall context.

All of the participants in this study were at the very least socialised in the Western world, which planted some very strong ideas about the value of work per se. Work is a means to a material end, but it also ”adds value” to a person. The feeling commonly experienced by unemployed people, namely losing some kind of value in other people’s eyes, is also observable in discussions about immigrants when the argument is used that they are welcome as long as they work. It is the abstract idea based on the protestant work ethic that (hard) work increases the value of a person, as ‘many unemployed say it feels like one is losing some kind of value in the eyes of society if one is unemployed and does not have that identity’, as Melissa clarifies.

4.2.2 Work as a source of meaning

Despite being a means to an end (a salary in the first place), all of the participants agreed that they were lucky to be working with something that gives meaning. Work is not the meaning of life, but it gives life meaning, it adds something, and even though work was not considered a paid-for hobby by everyone, Heli explained the idea of meaning well and why it is important:

But then, of course, work is a very big part of one’s life, work has to be meaningful, work gives a lot of meaning to life, though not
It isn’t the meaning of life, but it adds meaning, if you understand what I mean. [...] Both because it takes so much time of my life and because I got lucky and always had jobs that meant something, that engage and which aren’t my hobby but almost border on my hobby or my interests, my values and what I sympathise with. (Heli)

Part of the idea of meaning is that work can be close to one’s own values and interests and add meaning in that way. By working with something you believe in, you feel your work is meaningful, but this is not achievable by working solely for an NGO – any work can be meaningful for someone; it could be considered meaning on an individual level. Then there is the perception of meaning on a wider scale. Working for an NGO gives easy access to that layer of meaning, because the majority of people would agree that saving the rainforest or feeding starving people in developing countries are meaningful tasks. Work for corporations or public institutions can be equally important, though, and possibly more on a utilitarian level. Multiple participants expressed the sentiment that if you work that much and invest yourself so much, you may as well do it for a good cause:

Work for me is something I invest myself a lot in. And I want to do it as well as I can, to make a difference. [...] So, I mean, and I invest a lot of time and effort in it, and of course I get a lot out of it as well. For me, work, it’s important that there is sort of an aspect that it contributes to something useful. I can’t see myself working in an insurance company or bank, but partly because I’ve never done it and I’ve always worked in this kind of environment. That’s the most important thing for me in terms of work and what I look for. (Nelly)

Some of the participants in this study work in the field, meaning they are in a context that can be very dangerous and hazardous. When they are in these situations their private life is restricted, not only due to the sheer amount of work they have, but also due to security limitations. One of the field workers explained why meaning in work becomes a lot more important in these circumstances:

For me it’s more my work is, I have to get a lot of satisfaction, I mean, for the past few years, that is what it’s been. I have to get everything out of that job, because there is nothing else next to it. It’s not true, it’s a bit exaggerated, but I mean, I don’t just work because I need to pay my bills at the end of the month. I need to find meaning, get meaning out of it as well. (Nelly)
Nelly illustrates the connection between meaning and development. Given their rather privileged position (living in the Western world when choosing a job, and being well-educated), my participants have the opportunity to strive for work that adds meaning to their life and enables them to develop. Multiple participants expressed the feeling of meaningful work that does not add anything in a direct way to their financial or career prospects. Isabel makes it very clear that ‘it feels good to have more influence, but I don’t need to get anything out of it personally.’

4.2.3 Work as a source of development

The previous subsections have argued for work as a source of income and meaning, although meaning can be situated on a very personal level but also on a wider societal level. In the following I would like to offer my participants’ perspectives on the idea of work as development. I did not ask them in which category work falls for them. The question was “What is work?” and these three categories emerged from their answers.

Additionally to being a source of income and even providing meaning, work was considered a source for development by the majority. One way to develop is to be challenged by one’s work. For Ebba, for instance, work is a challenge – it has to be a challenge – and consequently it is a source of development. Clara was quite entertaining when she made the link between work as not only a challenge and fun, but also a necessary evil. To solve this mystery for me, she continued by saying that ‘[w]ork is not just linked to pay. I work gladly and I work a lot, but not necessarily for money. But we have to work for money.’

For Clara the need to earn money is the necessary evil, whereas the work itself is fun and challenging. As with most things surrounding the lived experiences of people, even the considering if a source of development is considered work, is subjective. Adam explains:

[s]o I think that if I should say I just want to develop myself, I could work with aid work in some country and think this is just personal development, but someone else could see this as work. One could have something developing that someone else has as work. (Adam)

My participants might consider their work as a source for development, even though it is naturally a very subjective perception. Nevertheless, it does not diminish its relevance for defining what is work for this group of people. The importance of development can hardly be overestimated, as it contributes greatly to how much fun people perceive they have in their employment. Even winning the lottery would not necessarily cause them to stop:
I do not think that I would not work if I won 20 million – I would continue working, because it is so much fun to work. But it might be because I see work, I demand things from work, partly because it is important for me; it is not just a source of income. I want to develop, I want to see that it is a challenge, otherwise I get sad and bored. (Jill)

Even when it becomes exhausting and stressful, people feel that the learning and the enjoyment they derive from their jobs outweigh these negative aspects:

I cannot imagine having a job which bores me. OK, I have a lot now and it is a bit like, I cry because I miss the subway, on that level. But I am still having fun at work – I do fun things and I am learning things. I couldn’t have a job where I didn’t learn things. (Stella)

The concept of “proper” work implies a degree of suffering for Stella, but it also points to the creation of something:

I don’t think I have proper work, I think I am having fun and get paid for it and I am a bit bitter about the stress. Work is proper work, something I would have to feel bad about, when you create something, thus work-worker, electricians, cleaners or nurses where one actually does something for real. (Stella)

The opportunity to develop also contributes to the motivation to work. Sandra explains that ‘because one spends such a big part of one’s waking time at work, it should be something that one develops in life, something that gives motivation and the opportunity to develop.’

All participants, without exception, enjoyed their work. Some pointed out some obstacles or room for improvement, but they all conveyed the message that they genuinely liked what they did. Some were so enthusiastic that it was disarming:

Now, it’s not even, it’s just fun, it’s fun all the time, and it really feels damn good. But before it has almost always been connected to being laborious. [...] But now it’s not at all bothersome. (Marlow)

NGOs seem to have one unique advantage over traditional profit-driven companies, since possible negative experiences like increased workload, a stressful environment, moderate pay or emotionally challenging topics are counterbalanced by working for a greater cause from the perspective of the employee. This by no means implies that any of these aspects would be wished
for, but they are temporarily or permanently outweighed by working for the
good cause. Holly and Aston summarise beautifully in two sentences every-
thing work is and can be for my participants:

Work is a way to support oneself, it is something one does to learn
new things, it gives many social contacts, it gives the opportunity,
the outlet, for personal interests and wishes in the best of all cases.
(Holly)

Work for me is doing something that makes sense, something that
stimulates you, something in which you can grow through your
actions, and when you look at yourself in the morning in the mir-
ror you are proud of it. And it’s also security. You have to earn
money in this work. (Aston)

4.3 What is it about NGOs?

It is arguable that every industry has certain unique qualities, and the third
sector, if one wishes to use that term, is no exception. Non-governmental
organisations – for the most part – are not profit-driven, and so salaries are
not outrageously high, and resources, human as well as financial, are limited.
Employees often show strong organisational loyalty and a genuine interest in
societal change, which stands as an indicator for all kinds of causes in which
people become engaged. These include but are not limited to preserving the
environment, helping less advantaged groups and alleviating pain caused by
war or natural disasters.

The participants in this study work in quite different organisations with a
range of causes and goals, and different ways of going about to achieve those.
They also occupy very different positions within these organisations through a
wide variety of tasks. Something all of them have in common, one could call it
the lowest common denominator, is the wish that their employer, if not making
the world a better place, at least does not make it worse. When I asked Frank
if his employer needs to make the world a better place, he answered ‘[n]o, but
they should avoid making it worse, if they can help it.’

This common denominator does not mean that people are limiting their
definition of what meaningful work can be or what kind of work could be
engaging. Even when working for an NGO it is not a given that people see it as
the only option or see it uncritically as the “good” kind of work, as Heli points
out: ‘It doesn’t need to be just “good” things like peace on earth and education
for everyone and things like that – it’s not just those things that engage but it
could be... When I worked with industrial policies, with economic policies,
it could be about creating a labour market in a country.’ She continued by arguing that:

> engagement can be so much more. I think it is almost a little naive when someone says, and especially in idea-driven organisations like unions and others, that there is a pretty labour market and an ugly labour market, and we in the pretty labour market burn for ideas and in the ugly it’s just that income and expenses go together. There is a little bit of this kind of discussion that it is good to work for starving children in Africa, if one puts it like that. And it is ugly to work for profits. It doesn’t need to be coupled to engagement for work at all.

At the same time, Kathryn argued that for her it is ‘so much bigger than just going to work between 9 and 5.’

All the of participants in this study showed a clear commitment to making the world a better place, not necessarily “just” by working for NGOs, but also through their engagement in all kinds of activities outside of work hours that are aimed at changing society for the better. The majority of them participated in or initiated these kind of activities.

When asked about other possible employers, they showed a clear preference for employers that do more than just “no harm”. The interviews and the observations of my participants might create the impression that the third sector is populated with Mother Teresas and Mahatma Gandhis. I am fully aware that there exist dishonest, disloyal and simply unfaithful NGO employees, and the last scandal within a major help organisation happened only a few years ago. However, I did not meet those kinds of people while conducting this study. This chapter is meant to convey what I have seen, and as people had to agree voluntarily to participate, it is not exactly surprising that there might be a positive bias toward strongly believing in the value of NGOs.

4.3.1 Why work for an NGO?

Continuing the argument about some of the unique qualities of NGOs, my participants made clear to me, directly or indirectly, why they work for an NGO. Calvin suggested that something about working for an idealistic goal connects his colleagues and himself and that he really likes all of his colleagues, with the exception of very few.

Arthur elaborated on this idea by saying that a lot of people work for NGOs because they see an opportunity to realise their own moral and political goals. For him it is not surprising that in organisations where people work because of shared moral and political goals, ‘you work together with people whom
you find likeable’. Kathryn made a similar argument when she suggested that something about the good cause unites them as an organisation:

There is a belonging, I believe, and now I say among [members of the organisation] but I can imagine that this exists among others working for the Red Cross or Save the Children, that there is another kind of belonging, regardless if one is a volunteer or an employee, which might not exist if you work for, for example, Nordea.

This relates directly to the hen or egg question, which Calvin promptly takes up. He is proud to work for his organisation, but he reasons that before starting he was already interested in the questions with which his employer is concerned, which is why he applied for a job with this employer. For him there is first the belief and then the commitment to the organisation.

Many of my participants expressed in one way or another that they wanted to see a reflection of their own values in the values of their employer. Some were more moderate, like Frank, who explained to me that he is ‘very value-driven as a person, so I wouldn’t work for a company which does business I don’t stand for’, or like Tessa, who wished to work for things she supports. Joshua went one step further and excluded effectively all capitalist, commercial enterprises as potential employers:

I wouldn’t want to work for a profit-driven company again. I have, as long as I have the opportunity to support myself, by working with things which are good, which are changing the world in a good way, I will prioritise that. That means working in the non-profit sector for organisations whose values I sympathise with, or working for a public institution I sympathise with. For me a job in the private sector is nothing I see in front of me.

For some of my participants, being able to work for an organisation that has achieved things in the past contributes to their happiness, whereas in a volatile context work becomes intense and the individual turns to her colleagues for everything, as Nelly points out. In a very short time they become ‘your best friends, you forget all the rest and they are the most precious people you have around you.’

Tessa worked for a consultancy previously, and she explained to me that she is now really happy every morning when she goes to work and she feels grateful that everything has worked out for her. Tessa, Joshua and Marilyn mentioned the jobs they had before and the perceived lack of meaning despite having fun at work. They were not miserable, they were missing meaning.
The non-for-profit nature of their organisations is overall an appreciated aspect, but it is not the main reason why they work there. A couple of my participants mentioned that profit-driven organisations would be an option (as long as their values match), but it might be more difficult to find the desired combination of values and autonomy that they currently enjoy. A very high degree of autonomy in their work was commonplace among all of my participants, which they suggested contributes to their work satisfaction.

Shared values, a high degree of autonomy and the prospect of doing something good seem to attract people to work for NGOs. Even if the work itself might not be what they dreamt of, working for an organisation that is doing good maintains motivation:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, it’s ‘cause I guess most people working for an NGO are proud of working for that. Since, I mean, my salary is really poor. I could probably earn up to twice as much if I worked in the private sector, but I haven’t been able to keep a job in the private sector for more than six months ’cause I just get bored and I don’t feel any motivation in working. So here I feel the motivation that I am doing something for the environment, for the world, for the future, for a better world. (Matthew)

It can mean changing the world one person at a time, as Kathryn explains it for me. It is not just profits for some stockholders but something bigger. Jill quit her permanent job with a higher salary, because she believed in making a difference and because she shared the values of her organisation.

Doing no harm, as companies would sometimes say to emphasise their CSR efforts, is not good enough; instead, Melissa explains that her organisation is trying to make a difference.

None of the participants had a superhero complex or suggested they were personally saving the world. All were very conscious of the fact that it is a group effort, but all small and big parts are equally important. Ida explained that her particular job as a human resource manager might not save the world in the literal sense, but by doing a good job and employing the right people she was enabling her organisation to work more efficiently towards a shared goal. Marlow expressed the unwritten expectation that:

if you work here you should do it because you burn for [the cause of the organisation] and you want to join and develop better medicine and care, after-care. This is quite natural – I have no problem with that, and I stand for it.

This relates back to the first aspect mentioned by Calvin, namely that he really appreciates the community feeling in his work place. It appears that
NGOs are not supportive of oversized egos. Part of this community feeling is the unwritten agreement that working for at least some of the NGOs in this study becomes a lifestyle. Clara explained for me that working for her organisation is ‘an attitude to life. To work for [organisation] is not just a job and everybody who thinks that is not going to be happy here. That’s people who leave after a year or one and a half.’ Marcus pointed out some of the reasons why it becomes a lifestyle, by explicating that:

We do fairly extreme stuff [left out for anonymity reasons]. And together with the fact that this is a global organisation, you work in different time zones and it’s... yeah. I think it does get, it becomes a lifestyle.

Not all organisations have these extreme working conditions – some have reasonable working hours and quite usual working spaces. Their employees nevertheless point out “engagement” as a strong driving force which is partly linked to a strong identification with their organisation, as Melissa explains. She had considered working for another organisation, and in that context she realised that ‘I see myself or my work as an important part of my identity. It characterises a big part of my life, and just this thing with drawing boundaries between work and private life is not so developed because it is idea-driven.’

Isabel argued similarly that work does not feel laborious or bothersome, because she is driven by engagement. Jacob summarised it quite fittingly when saying that:

Most of the people here are so engaged in what they are doing anyway. It is not like you work here because the salary is the best here or whatever. You work here because you want to save the world, at least a lot of people.

This engagement is assisted if the organisation has a strong brand or track record of successful activities. Aston is proud to work for this particular humanitarian organisation because they get things done, they have the capacity and they really help. Adam expresses similar feelings of satisfaction and motivation about the fact that his organisation really does have an influence on the lives of a certain group of people.

When asked why this particular organisation, Ebba pointed out that its size and reach played a major role in attracting her to work there. All three work for different organisations which are very different in size, organisational goals and reach, but all three reasoned similarly. This indicates that size and importance are not necessarily objective measures for the employee. Three participants in this study, Tanja, Siri and Arthur, mentioned that for them it is not necessarily a specific organisation but they could also be attracted by a
particular project. In their case the content of a project is more of a priority than the overarching organisation (brand).

Molly and Jill referred to the potential of identification by relating to both the “brand” and the cause of their organisations. Both organisations work for children and have strong and well-known brands. Molly explains ‘I find at [organisation] it’s easy to sell, I mean I can stand, I mean everyone is like “wow, that’s amazing and of course we wanna do this and that”.’ This stands in contrast to the experiences of other NGO employees in this study, who describe their engagement with their organisation more in terms of career-limiting.

Something that is not exactly obvious but clearly worth mentioning are the potential drawbacks some employees experience because of their decision to start working for a (certain) NGO. Working for an NGO is not necessarily a career enhancer, and depending on the country, this affects employees of different NGOs.

So, by joining [organisation] you are basically walking into a wasp’s nest. It’s nothing you do easily. I mean it is, but what I mean, it’s nothing you do to strengthen your career – you do it for other reasons, to put it mildly [laughs]. (Marcus)

Working for an NGO has certain disadvantages, some of which will be presented more in depth later on, but it seems helpful to point out the increased tolerance people exhibit toward payment, working conditions and social security. Arthur exemplifies this point very clearly: ‘the working conditions which I now have at [organisation], the social security which I have and the salary, if I had those in a private company I’d quit the job immediately.’

Reasons given by my participants for why they work for NGOs include shared values, a significant degree of autonomy, the prospect of doing good, which goes together with their engagement, and strong, attractive organisations (brands). For people working in the field there is also the additional reason of leading quite an exceptional life. Nelly explains:

It’s really fascinating and it’s really interesting, the work is fascinating and even, I mean, the life you lead is quite exceptional and extreme; it’s always extreme because the work is so fascinating. I mean, you do work, which isn’t very common, I mean, a lot times you are in prisons or you are really confronted with the terms of the conflict. So the work is quite intense in that sense.

Danton relates to the argument of an extreme life and enriches it with the perceived purity of his organisation’s goals:

Let’s say it’s... it’s truly humanitarian and the real... When you work in these organisations, you feel that it’s no kind of other
agendas than just the one that is to help and protect victims of conflicts. So it’s solely humanitarian goals. And that’s quite nice to feel that. It’s also quite interesting to work in a really, really neutral organisation, because it brings you... Then you can get in contact with all the parties involved in a conflict, and then it’s very interesting because you can have the views of everybody and its very rich, very interesting.

As with all of the organisations represented in this study, even for ones working in the field, one important aspect is that the individual does not necessarily save the world. People retreat to focus on small achievements, on making a difference for even just one person. Nelly explains that when she joined [organisation], ‘it started all in “save the world kind of thing,” but it’s really, you know, you get satisfaction out of little things, out of small, little contributions that you can make.’

4.3.2 NGO peculiarities

All workplaces – and on a larger scale, industries – have some unique quirks that make working there exciting, at times exhausting and possibly attractive. The NGOs in this study are no exception. Some of the following peculiarities are limited to just one or two of the organisations, while some concern more or less all of them to a greater or lesser degree. With the help of my participants I identified nine peculiarities that make their working lives challenging but also exciting.

A lot of the people working for NGOs chose these organisations because they identify with the cause. Effectively they are working in areas that are close to home, so to say. For some employees it is then really just a very small step to blurring a boundary and working with work-related things, even in their free time, because they reason they would do it anyway due to their personal engagement with the topic. When talking about scanning the media landscape for related news, Heli explains ‘I would do this even if I wasn’t working here, now it has become part of my work in a way’. Isabel explains to what extent social technologies facilitate this fluidity of boundaries:

In the beginning, when I started to work [here], I checked my email during vacations as well, and I spread things on Facebook, that’s what you do. This is a commitment for me; if I had another job, a wage job, I would surely sit and spread things about [what she is working with] in my free time anyway, so this is the bit, the thing, when free time and work move closer together.
Jacob echoed this sentiment when he pointed out that people usually do not choose these organisations for the money or to enjoy a traditional career. Since people work with issues about which they care, their interests do indeed become part of their work, which might make it more difficult to decide where work starts and ends, or at least make it more difficult to decide where paid labour ends. Frank makes this point explicit:

I think it is unavoidable that you sometimes dedicate a thought to work in your free time, but I do it very seldom. But I think it is unavoidable that it happens now and then, if one has a job one cares about – one in which you are emotionally invested. And this is the risk with working for such idea-driven organisations on the whole, in that there are so many that burn so much for those questions that they sit at home and think about [cause of the organisation].

The next two aspects are closely related. Some people working for NGOs come directly from a movement i.e. they worked regularly for either the cause or the organisation voluntarily, before getting a paid job at the organisation. When talking about people contacting him outside regular office hours, Joshua tells me:

I worked in an organisation where I used to volunteer a lot, for seven years, before I started working here. So many who contact me are people I already know. They aren’t just members or colleagues, but they are friends, so this is why I often answer directly.

He explains further that he even spends part of his free time with these same people, and because he has always invested his free time in this organisation, it does not feel weird to do so even now. But at the same time he makes it clear to me that he feels the freedom to say “no” or not to answer until the next working day, if he wishes to do so.

Some employees of NGOs working with the help of volunteers and activists are recruited from that base. As employees, they are working with volunteers and other stakeholders that can more or less just be reached after traditional working hours. Melissa and Kathryn exemplified this point when they talked about working with volunteers and boards of directors that have other jobs during the daytime. Melissa explained ‘it happens because we work with people that work voluntarily in the evenings and weekends, if they have other jobs, so quite a bit of our work when we meet, happens in the evenings and on the weekends.’ Kathryn simply pointed out that it happens ‘seldomly that we have 9 to 5 work and then we just let go.’
In the next paragraphs I will take up multiple points that came up during the interviews and which fit broadly into the category “working conditions”. NGOs, as with many other organisations, often work across multiple time zones. This in itself is more of a mitigating factor for work outside of traditional working hours. Kathryn explains that she has many hours overlapping between her time zone and Europe, but she has 30 European organisations. In her words ‘that equation rarely works.’ Marcus confessed that he does sometimes dream of another job, and one criterion in this respect would be less 24/7 work:

I think it would be something where I can, where it will not be natural to wake up five o’clock in the morning to check your emails and not to work in all time zones, like me working on Canadian issues and Japanese issues at the same time. So it is basically you are working more or less 24/7 – you are just sleeping in between because of the time differences, Canada that way and Japan that way, it’s a bit hard to make it happen. So sometimes I dream about, you know, working in the forest cutting trees, it’s very simple.

Two further particular aspects of working conditions in NGOs are the constant shortage of resources and the inherent dangers that come with fieldwork. The shortage of resources concerns money and as a consequence labour power for more or less all organisations in this study, except for one. Molly noted that there is no substitute in her organisation if someone takes leave of absence for whatever reason, while Clara explained that in her organisation there is no one else who could do her job. Matthew quantifies his workload for me by saying that he is support for over 100 people whereas the average in his job would be closer to 30. Melissa argued that ‘it is so much work that it easily fills not just one but two full-time jobs – and we could fill even more.’

Stella, working for the same organisation, explained to me, when asked about people contacting her outside traditional working hours, ‘no, actually this isn’t OK, but it is also because there is no other function here, there is no one else who can take care of it. So what shall I do?’ There were so many examples of resource shortages and their link to overwork that the subject could fill a whole chapter just by itself. I will conclude this particular aspect, though, with Marcus, who explained this point succinctly:

I feel that the workload is only getting bigger and bigger and bigger, and when I started here I still had time to, it was a good mix of times of relaxing and working long hours and coming late the next day and it was very laid back. And now it doesn’t seem like
you have those hours off any more. And it also used to be, like, if you had a push where you work more or less 24/7 for two, three weeks, then you had whatever time you needed afterwards to relax, [but] now it’s... you don’t really take more than one day off before you start working again.

According to Parker, this increase has something to do with the reassuring feeling our society gains through reports and information produced, in that a report becomes a visual marker of work that has been done. Marcus makes the connection to technology in this respect:

Before you had the phone bills that stopped it, but now it’s nothing. You are available online and you can work all the time – and there is nothing stopping you. And this organisation is full of people that really want to make a difference, and unless they are guided in a smart way, because we are individuals, we don’t like to be told what to do but it’s definitely, the organisation has a job to do in guiding people and how to work smart with smartphones and online tools.

Employees work for organisations that go into the field to help deal with additional difficulties. The possibly easier ones to deal with are the concerns of friends and relatives. Parker explains:

There is a lot of work involved in reassuring your family and loved ones about your work, your working environment – you need to share a lot, because they imagine that you are gonna be left on your own at the airport and then a guy with a big beard will come and abduct you and post footage of you being killed on the internet, you know? So you need to reassure your family members and share pictures with them.

Probably the more difficult parts to deal with are the restrictions that a volatile context with a high security risk places on an individual’s work and social life. In a volatile context work becomes intense, and so the individual turns to her colleagues for everything, as Nelly points out. In a very short time they become ‘your best friends, you forget all the rest and they are the most precious people you have around you cause you need them to cope with the whole situation’. As people live together it is impossible to disassociate. Parker, in this respect, explains that every aspect of life is shared:

You share your professional life with your colleagues, which is normal – you share the intimate parts of your life with your colleagues, meaning that on your weekends your colleague becomes
your friend. He is the one with whom you play volleyball or have a beer or try to talk about something else than work, you know? (Parker)

Danton elucidates ‘[i]f the security is not good I would say it brings some limitations. So you have less possibility to move, less possibility to see people, and it’s a source of frustration I would say.’ For some people these restrictions on any form of personal life, or the perceived inability to have a personal life, lead to an eventual exit from the organisation. Some contexts are more difficult than others, though, as Aston explains:

    For me, [country of assignment] is, like, subscribed to some kind of website nolife.com. It’s always, it’s heavy, and if your colleagues are not funky, you don’t have much to share.

Contributing to the feeling that work never ends is the fact that if something happens it is they who have to react to and deal with the situation in some way. Aston explains that ‘you are always ready, in case something happens in terms of security:’

    I mean the thing they would tell you, “You are [organisation] as long as, from the moment you step foot in the country on assignments, you are at work”. I mean, on weekends, if I’d go and have a beer, I had to behave in a particular fashion. To represent the institution I can be requested in the middle of my, you know, weekend to go to a prison because a riot occurred [...] (Parker)

    The idea of work never leaving one’s side, and being able to intrude at whatever time, might be just as much about identity. Marlow, Marcus, Clara and others mentioned similar considerations, in that one is always associated with one’s organisation. But in the field it is more pronounced, because work can also intrude as actual work, not just by association, so that the personal becomes political, and the employee is an ambassador for the organisation, which is especially pronounced when it comes to exposing a certain (moral) behaviour.

    Marcus explains that ‘when you are asked if it is personal or private, I mean, you are associated with the organisation as soon as you get your name in some way associated with [organisation], it’s there. It’s that simple.’ He spent many family gatherings arguing in favour the work of his organisation and he explains that ‘[w]e were more hated than the worst terrorists.’ At the same time, Tessa sees being an ambassador as part of her work.

    Working for NGOs spills over into private life, not just through long hours, but also because people take issues home with them, and this can be strenuous
for other people in their environment, as the topics are usually not overly positive or joyful. Clara connects the motivation and commitment people show with work being a topic at home which is not for everyone:

The people here work a lot of overtime, because the motivation and the commitment are very big. You talk even in your private life about the problems [organisation] works with. That’s not everyone’s cup of tea.

Marcus goes into the responsibility of his organisation in this respect:

The people, the girlfriends and the husbands and the wives of people working in this organisation, they actually do get a lot of negative information all the time [...] I mean, it’s very natural for us working here, as we are optimistic, we think it can actually be changed. But then you have, when you get home and you talk about the issue, you talk about only the negative issues. It gets very, the communication gets very negative and depressing.

Taking problems home and making them a part of one’s personal life can be one consequence of the emotionally exhausting nature of the work many NGO employees experience. This is not to say that other professions do not experience significant strain on their emotions, and this might be especially prominent for doctors, nurses and social workers, but in the context of this study the focus is on what my participants experience and how they make sense thereof.

There is obviously an enormous variety of NGOs across the globe with thousands of different goals, causes and ways of achieving them accordingly. There are organisations fighting for the rainforest, for workers’ rights, children’s rights and for physically or mentally disadvantaged groups. There are organisations that fight by inflicting damage on corporations, that fight by raising awareness, and there are organisations that lobby and educate. Organisations can of course also be distinguished by their level of bureaucratisation, their age, their size, etc. I do not claim this study is by any means a full representation of all the emotional difficulties NGO employees might encounter, but it nevertheless gives an indication of why letting go of work might be particularly important for this group of people.

In order to explain some of the struggles people experience, I will focus on two aspects in particular, namely place and cause. Employees of the organisations represented in this study can be divided by place of work, meaning working in the field or in an office at a relatively save distance away from the issue at hand, and by the severity of the cause for which the organisation is working. Severity is by no means a measure of importance – it is simply an
indicator as to why it might be harder to let go of work and why it might be especially important to let go. Some organisations work with issues such as war crimes or human rights abuses, which can be very intense to witness and be confronted with on a daily basis.

Place of work

The participants in this study can be divided into field workers and office workers in the broadest sense. Their experiences are very different from each other, since field workers have a more immediate experience of the atrocities of war and the devastation natural disaster brings. Nelly describes that

> [e]ven though I’ve done it for years, it’s not like I’ve built this big wall around me and now I am completely numb to all the suffering of people. It’s not like that. It still affects me.

The closeness to and the observation of these crimes is just one of three aspects that make life in the field difficult. The second aspect concerns the security situation in the context in which the people find themselves. If there are many restrictions, it not only limits social life, but it also puts employees in a permanent state of alarm. Danton describes the sort of tension that takes hold of NGO workers, interlocutors and victims – something that eventually ‘gets to you. It is the profound feeling that you are in charge, you are the emergency squad, and if something happens it is you who has to be ready. Aston summarised it by saying ‘[y]ou are never relaxed. [...] Our work is emergency, and we are the ones that need to be ready if there is an emergency.’

It never ends. You are always ready if something happens in terms of security. For instance, even in Africa you can get the phone call, and you have to be ready. You are never relaxed. That is something that I feel when I am on holiday in terms of security, my own security, my sense of security when I am in Europe – I feel completely relaxed. Here, even at night, even in the evening, you are not in your context, so you are reacting to something that is completely different all the time. (Aston)

Additionally, being out in the field deprives people of their “normal” life, of social interaction with people outside of work, which makes disconnecting and recovery more difficult. Together with the severity of the cause it can become a significant emotional burden. The physical proximity to colleagues, to people they did not choose, can be, depending on the group dynamic, an additional strain.
So it depends a lot. One of the challenges in the field, surprisingly, and that is something that surprised me, is not the difficulties that have to do with your activities, the negotiation with the interlocutors and all these things, but it’s your own colleagues, the ones that you live with and the internal issues, the interpersonal relationships and characters, because you live all the time with them.

(Aston)

All participants working in the field made me aware that turning to your family or friends back home for emotional support is not really an option. For instance, Skyping with them can be perceived as draining, and even when the field workers could explain their situation, understanding might be accomplished but not necessarily the desired ‘emotional debriefing,’ as Nelly put it.

Cause of the organisation

For both groups, field workers and non-field workers, there is the issue of the media bringing work back into one’s private life. Clara explained that she retreats from Twitter after about 6pm, because otherwise she would be confronted constantly with work-related news. A similar course of action was described by Abby, who explained that especially news from countries in which her organisation works can be daunting; for example, ‘when somebody was threatened again or [...] when there was an assault again. That’s of course news that gets to you.’

For some NGO employees it is easier to let go of work, and according to Charlie this has something to do with his role, which involves less direct involvement with field issues, whereas before he would – psychologically – take work home. Despite the highly involved cause of his organisation, he now manages to leave work behind, and for him one reason is his role in the human resources department.

Stella makes intelligible the entanglement of her organisation’s cause and her boundary-crossing:

It is also the case that just because I am free, I am not ignoring that someone is going to be executed maybe this week or tomorrow because one doesn’t do anything now. Even if I don’t see myself as an [organisation’s] activist. [Organisation] gets information about it, I wouldn’t not spread those even if I were free and even if I could draw a line; it’s like, it’s ultimately still a person that is at risk of being executed.

Letting go of work – and therefore the cause of the organisation, if it includes a certain degree of urgency or human suffering – is not always straightforward.
This does not mean that other employees do not experience difficulties in letting go of work either, but the cause of the organisation herein should be seen more as a mitigating factor.

Clara elucidates that, at least for her (though she was not the only one to mention it), the severity of the issues with which she deals makes it incredibly important to sometimes distance herself from work, physically, emotionally and mentally. She felt she needed ‘a balancing out in [her] life. Especially when you always deal with such unpleasant things.’ For Clara this issue became apparent during a crisis with which her organisation dealt for months, during which time a lot of the employees did nothing other than work and sleep, sometimes doing both at the office. (An interesting observation in the washroom of that organisation was a row of dental cups, each with its own toothbrush).

Marilyn told me about a limit-exposure-strategy set up to deal with the atrocities she confronts in her work. She said that she ‘turns off, [because] if I took in all atrocities it would break me. It’s just now and then that I take in all of it.’ Stella admitted that fortunately she is not directly involved with the issues her organisation fights for, but in her role she does work with volunteer engagement.

I understand perfectly, the hopeless job. Though it isn’t. Things are happening but I am not directly involved in those questions, so I often avoid reading the really tough reports.

Additionally she pointed out that the work does not appear hopeless to her, even though from the outside it might sometimes be the impression. Employees of NGOs find motivation in the small things, the small victories, as Nelly also explains.

Despite their best efforts, sometimes they do not know if their work has changed anything. Isabel elucidated this by saying ‘just this feeling that one is inside a system and continues working without knowing if it’s worth it. Without knowing if you get anything out of it, whether personally or for the planet, it can be that way’.

For Ebba this is added to by the moral expectations she assumes are resting on her. She wants people to care for the environment, so she feels she needs to be a role model and behave in an exemplary manner: ‘I try to tell people how to live their life. Therefore, I need to live twice and thrice as good. That’s the exhausting part. And that I know it’s better to live that way and [...] it really makes sense of what you do there.’
4.4 Tentative findings about working within an NGO

When looking at their definitions of work, my respondents’ stories provide three compelling reasons as to why they do what they do. For them work is a source of income, a source of personal development and a source of meaning. Their sense-making of what work is and what can be expected is based partly on their commitment to an NGO. What is particular about working for an NGO can be divided broadly into three categories, namely shared values, working conditions and emotional strain.

Firstly, people want to work for certain NGOs because they fundamentally share their values, or the cause of the organisation is close to home. This, not surprisingly, increases the likelihood that one will like their colleagues a lot – shared interests and values can have this effect. Furthermore, a lot of NGO employees have been volunteers and active in the movement before. Both of those factors facilitate rather permeable boundaries.

Secondly, working conditions in many NGOs are marked by a shortage of resources, dealing with issues reaching across multiple time zones, and a certain danger in respect to life and health (especially for field workers, but even for activists this is a concern). Working across time zones increases the likelihood that an employee is expected to be available during off-hours, which is rarely a formal prerequisite from the employer, but work has to get done somehow. The common shortage of resources contributes further to this pressure. Salaries usually cannot compete with the private sector, and therefore more emphasis is put on personal development and abstract meaning, in order to justify working conditions. My respondents’ stories suggest that their engagement and “doing good” are their main motivators, not money.

Thirdly, working for an NGO can be emotionally challenging, for both the employee and their family. Employees in the field face many atrocities and danger, and so additionally they need to reassure their families constantly. Even non-field workers are confronted with awful or overwhelming things that make it difficult to let go of work. More importantly, however, is the underlying assumption of increased availability.
5. Conversations about expectations and boundaries

In the following chapter I will present my understanding of my participants’ perspectives on expectations and boundaries. The first half of the chapter concerning expectations is structured following my understanding of the social aspects of my participants’ work experiences, the expectations they communicated to me. The second half of the chapter focuses on their descriptions of blurred and defended boundaries.

5.1 Expectations

Up until now, the focus has been on how my participants understand work and how they reason in regard to working for an NGO. These aspects are integral to understanding why and how they relate to boundaries and technology in the way they do. One further aspect for their sense-making should be considered, which I summarise in this part under the notion “expectations”. I divide instances of discussing during the interviews driving forces for a certain kind of behaviour into three broad categories, namely external, organisational and individual expectations. The following table 5.1 gives an overview and examples of each category of expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External expectations of keeping boundaries</td>
<td>‘People also have partners that expect them to be present and have time off. [...] I try to wait until she has gone to bed. I usually do.’ [laughs] (Marcus)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5.1: External, organisational and individual expectations

“Organisational expectations” is by far the largest category, which indicates a certain dominance. External and individual expectations are important, but organisational expectations are more pronounced. This might not be overly surprising given the huge amount of time we dedicate to work and, consequently, our organisation every day.

#### 5.1.1 External expectations

I will start this part with instances where the participants expressed some form of pressure from the outside of the organisation. This could be on a cultural level (in some countries there might not be a division between a private and a work phone) or on an industry-wide level (this is how people working for NGOs are expected to relate to their work). While talking about work and private phones and other media, Arthur points me to a culture-specific aspect:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational expectation of self-management</td>
<td>‘Nobody is telling us to do this, okay? This is something we do voluntarily. I got an e-mail from one of my colleagues and it was sent at 1:30 at night, so I replied to him and to the others on e-mail “you shouldn’t be working that late”, and he replied “why are you answering this e-mail at 5:15 in the morning?”’ (Marcus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational expectation of exploiting personal resources</td>
<td>‘[n]o written policy, there are no rules for what one can do and cannot do, and one is expected to use one’s own judgement. But this judgement is formed by common discussions in our section.’ (Holly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual expectations to be informed, spread values and keep track</td>
<td>‘I got the advice that if I did it as Sandra instead of [organisation], it would feel more personal and it would appeal to more people that way.’ (Sandra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual expectations to manage life and family</td>
<td>‘You do not have to actually produce any output, it is more a keeping track and making sure that there is no harm done to the organisation.’ (Jacob)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Google chat, it is the easiest way. We usually run in and out of meetings, it is kind of easy.’ (Jacob)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

118
This division is simply not enforceable in Norway. When people have my private number, also in a work-related context, they will call the private number and not the work one, even if it’s in a professional context.

This non-distinction between private and work phone numbers puts greater pressure on the individual to respect work and free time. Even though it is customary to use someone’s private number for work purposes, that does not mean it is acceptable to call at any time or for any reason. Arthur does not mind if people call in case of a work-related emergency, but at the same time he trusts that they will not call about petty details at 9pm. This arrangement demands a certain degree of trust and consideration between the involved parties, but it becomes more difficult when working with volunteers or people dealing with these issues after traditional working hours.

Melissa takes up the example of a politician contacting her on Facebook, albeit this goes both ways, as she also uses Facebook to gain access to politicians in a faster and more informal way:

So, I do get a whole lot of stuff, but even some politicians write on Facebook. Let me think if it was last summer or the summer before when I had such an auto-reply on my e-mail so [name of politician] [...] wrote “I’ve written on Facebook ’cause I saw you are on vacation. Could you participate in this activity, this seminar?” or whatever it was. So there are work-related things coming there as well. This is why I can’t ignore it completely. It’s not that much work stuff there, but there is some.

Melissa says she cannot just ignore it, and one can certainly understand why this is so, because once you have looked at a message on Facebook the other person is informed that you have seen it, and it is therefore considered quite rude to just not react in a reasonable amount of time. Unlike during the postal era, three weeks is not considered an appropriate waiting time. Not looking at it is one option, but that limits the individual’s freedom to use their own personal network during their free time. During the same interview, at a later point, she explained to me that part of her behaviour and her consideration to get a smartphone are driven by group pressure: ‘It’s this, if you are good at your job you use all available means, and a little bit it’s this, that you become a dinosaur if you don’t embrace certain things.’ For Melissa, this outside pressure changes the way she is supposed to work:

Maybe a bit of both. A couple of my colleagues have said “Melissa, you should have a smartphone” [...] but I don’t feel that much pressure from that side. But I think this, these groups,
politicians and other people working with similar things in other organisations and [...] it is taken for granted that one has a smartphone and checks e-mails on the phone, that you see the e-mail pretty much right when it arrives. Thus, I do not send an SMS but I send an e-mail, because I count on everyone having their e-mail on their phones, everyone has a smartphone. This is the group pressure, I think.

At the same time, Stella is fully aware that it is not so unusual that people contact her on Facebook, ‘because I use it a lot, so it’s not so weird that active members are using it back. That I get messaged late in the evenings about something.’ Marilyn even considers the possible positive aspects of working more at the weekend. When I ask her if she works for her organisation at weekends she answers ‘Yes, that happens. I should do it more than what I do now [...] because the audience is more receptive at the weekend.’

There is some consideration of a work-related audience on Facebook, but simultaneously there is a personal part of the network. The majority of my participants take into account what they think their personal connections might find appropriate. Tanja explains:

I don’t have so many friends that are engaged in [cause of her organisation]; it just becomes odd if I write work things on Facebook, and no I usually don’t share either.

Isabel reasons differently, as her profile was created with a work purpose in mind. The degree of identification with the cause of the organisation and the composition of the friends circle might also play a role.

As an interesting example Kathryn explains that even though she prioritises the needs of her organisation, even when she might be on vacation, she does look for ways to avoid direct involvement with work. What happens is that outside stakeholders of her organisation might contact her during her private time (often on Facebook) and she does indeed read any message. This signals that work is allowed in, but instead of dealing with it directly and contacting the outside party, she chooses to keep her work involvement inside the organisational boundaries and asks a colleague to deal with any issues.

The amount of work intrusion is mitigated by the use of technology (entrance of work) as well as through the distribution of work with the help of technology. Kathryn elucidates:

In that case I would rather e-mail a colleague and ask them to take care of it. I actually wouldn’t answer, because I don’t want to be available at that time.
For her it has a lot to do with the fact that ‘when parents contact me, there is something they are worried about here and now’, so she would not necessarily be able to help them anyway.

5.1.2 Organisational expectations

As with external expectations it is not exactly straightforward to separate organisational expectations from technological affordances. Heli explains:

If you work here it is part of the deal that your boundaries have to be a bit fluid. But I think it is a constant balancing act, and most of all I think you always have to talk about it in the workplace. That doesn’t mean you always agree about what can be expected, though.

Disagreements about what can reasonably be expected can be short-lived, as in the case of Isabel, who did not want a Facebook account but, according to Isabel, her boss simply declared ‘not having a Facebook account is like not having a mobile phone, you have to get one’, following which the boss asked the IT responsible to create one for Isabel.

The following is a good example of how expectations are formed by both technological affordances and the social aspects of a workplace. These could be organisation-wide beliefs and assumptions or just the example of your closest supervisor.

And then there is this thing with expectations. My boss is changing jobs; he’s great in many ways, but he is a bit of a workaholic and he is quite limitless when it comes to work. So he’s one of those that if I got a smartphone from work that was my work mobile, he would expect that I checked the mobile. [...] But it’s the little things with expectations as well. Because as long as I do not have a smartphone, you can just say, no I have not checked my e-mail, I have been in meetings all day and not been at the computer. Then it’s an excuse. Whereas if he had known that I had a smartphone, I would have been able to check on the cell phone.

Kathryn elucidates pretty well how the affordances of technology, together with an individual’s activities, form a culture of availability. The organisational culture does not just pop up from nothing – it is formed, maintained and also changed by the individual. She clarifies:

e-mails are there all the time, and somehow it is expected that one will be available by e-mail all the time, and then when you begin
to respond you are available, and then you have signalled that you are available.

In the same vein, Marilyn is very insightful when she concludes that part of her situation is caused by her own expectations that are forming the organisation’s expectations when it comes to availability and responsiveness. She openly acknowledges that she has contributed greatly to her challenges with social technologies: ‘I think I have created this situation myself, because I think this could be very different. This is a bit self-inflicted, so to say.’ Also, Marlow is aware of the consequences of his after-hours working:

It can send these signals, it can create wrong expectations later on; if, for example I decide to leave the phone here one day, then I might have built up the expectation that I answer e-mails even at night, and then people are disappointed with me.

As an interesting side effect, people reported using their own profiles partly because it is more efficient (no need to reconnect with everybody) and partly because it facilitates contact with members, volunteers and activists, as it feels more personal. Using their personal profiles is, overall, a gain for an organisation, although the consequences for the individual might be more varied. There is the aspect, however, of being associated with a good cause, which possibly contributes positively to the individual’s self-branding.

Simultaneously, the individual exploits personal resources for organisational gain, but this action does not necessarily have to be beneficial for the individual. Sandra clarifies:

On the one hand, do we have a Facebook group for my job? Of course, and then for several of our local branches, but I got the hint that if I did it as “Sandra” instead of [organisation], it would feel more personal and it would appeal to more people that way.

This is of course highly dependent on the individual being willing to place their own needs on the back-burner and instead focus on the demands and needs of the organisation, as both Sandra and Marilyn have done. Marilyn suggests that ‘maybe my private role is simply secondary. I keep thinking of the organisation’s benefit.’

This exploitation of personal resources for work is not entirely unrelated to the limited resources most of the organisations face. Marcus explicates that

[w]e are not, or the way this office works, we are so small and we have such big issues that we are working on that we need to be available after hours. And that’s also part of what we are paid for, I mean, we are supposed to be available more than just working hours.
Partly people expect and are expected to set their boundaries in a way that suits them and satisfies their needs. On the other hand employees are expected to respect the organisation’s requirement that they are able to react to external events. Heli clarifies that ‘on the one hand people must be able to set their boundaries, but on the other hand we do work in a business that is very event-driven and environment-driven’, so individual and organisational expectations might not always match.

Similarly, when the organisation wishes to spread information it is expected that people will exercise their own judgement and employ autonomy when deciding what to spread and what not to spread. This is of course a great idea in theory, but it is a bit unclear as to how it works in practice. Isabel describes part of the informal process: ‘Yeah, it’s a bit like this – there could be a mail “we’ve added a new article about [particular cause], share it on Facebook and Twitter”. A bit like that, it’s not a must, people take a stand, there is an openness.’

Holly refers back to the organisational social media policy, which can be a second aspect in the process of regulating employee behaviour on social technologies:

So I use it both privately and for work, and it is also a policy of [organisation] to work a lot with social media, to show what we are doing, share information about both what one as an individual says and what one as an employee works with, what one does. But also what the organisation does and which seminars and lectures we do, and so we are spreading it via Facebook and say often that it’s streamed online so people can tweet in the meantime.

Tanja, on the other hand, tells me that she receives these requests to spread things, but ‘it is up to each and every person to do so, and I usually do not do it.’

Interestingly, in the interviews, my participants almost unanimously declared that no one tells them to work in the way that they do (referring to using their own profiles, working odd or long hours). Stella defended her organisation immediately by saying ‘there is no one who tells me to work this way, really not. If my boss has said anything it would be that I shouldn’t do it, though it does work for me.’ In a similar vein, Marcus declares wholeheartedly:

Nobody is telling us to do this, okay? This is something we do voluntarily. I got an e-mail from one of my colleagues and it was sent at 1:30 at night, so I replied to him and to the others on e-mail “you shouldn’t be working that late,” and he replied “Why are you answering this e-mail at 5:15 in the morning?”
He continues by saying that it is ‘not something that really is requested by us a lot – to a certain extent it is but not really, but I mean we are in a constant fight.’ Isabel feels confident that she could say to her boss that they need to prioritise because it is too much, but she also says that she puts in more time than necessary. People evaluate the actual and the communicated needs of the organisation and try to adjust their behaviour accordingly.

This is closely related to Marilyn’s assessment about the fact that the organisation’s goal for availability and responsiveness will ultimately influence the level of stress experienced by employees due to the demands placed on them. Adam, working for another organisation, confirms this assessment by explaining:

If it was a lot more, or if the organisation’s needs were so serious that I was forced to keep track more often, I would perceive it as more stressful.

Even if something is missed on social media, in his organisation this is not considered a huge problem.

Molly summarises the pressures exerted by overbearing superiors and the conflicting feelings about who is responsible for these boundaries:

Everyone, my boss e-mails in the evenings so it adds, I mean, she comes in, she starts, she is in meetings all day and then at night she just e-mails everything. So obviously it comes from the outside as well. And then I could say no and I could do more by myself, take responsibility for my own situation, but I don’t, because if I answer it in the evening I don’t have a million things to do the next day.

Contributing stress factors include scarcity of resources (otherwise there would be no need to work, for example during a leave of absence) and the boundary crossing behaviour of a superior. Other workplaces additionally need to accommodate different time zones and the working times of volunteers or activists.

Adam describes that his organisation has board members who work well after traditional office hours but that there exists a widespread respect that the employees are not expected to engage in after hour work. Kathryn, working for another organisation, acknowledges that having a board of directors might imply some after hours contact, but this arrangement should be mutual.

For Joshua it is the difficulty of the question reaching him via Facebook after hours. If he can answer it easily, he will provide an answer, but if it is more difficult he will wait until the next day or ask them to send him an e-mail so he can answer the next day. Overall, he believes people understand that this
is his personal Facebook and that they shouldn’t disturb him too much. What is important here is that Joshua says he feels:

Safe to, that I could speak up in case it becomes too much. In case I should experience it as a problem I feel I could say stop, this is mine, I am going to unfriend you, because we’re no longer friends.

Similarly, it is expected that the organisation will find a way to deal with or to guide people who, given their emotional involvement, may be more prone to overworking and exploiting themselves, in a smart way by boundary setting without setting boundaries. A lot of responsibility is ascribed to the individual and how they work, given that the organisation has not told them to work that way (always be available), and so people reason it is their own responsibility to make it work for themselves.

There is a certain level of disconnect between what the organisation allegedly does not demand (constant availability) and yet indirectly requires (constant availability) due to limited resources. For the individual, messages are ambivalent and the degree of personal responsibility is murky at best. Marcus summarises this point convincingly:

Before you had the phone bills it stopped, but now it’s nothing. You are available online and you can work all the time, and there is nothing stopping you. And this organisation is full of people that really want to make a difference, and unless they are guided in a smart way, because we are individuals we don’t like to be told what to do, but it’s definitely, the organisation has a job to do in guiding people and how to work smart with smartphones and online tools.

This study includes one example of an organisation that has established ways to guide, without provoking disapproval from their employees, behaviour toward stricter boundaries and clearly expressed respect for private time. Adam explains to me that it is extremely rare that anyone disturbs him outside business hours, ‘because we have a principle at this workplace that if someone has finished for the day, that person has finished – and that has to be respected. People have their private time.’ Adam, as well as Tanja (both working for the same organisation) in a similar comment, expresses the importance of the social component in the choices the individual is able to make. Tanja commented after having explained to me the rules and expectations at her workplace:

[...] it sounds really good, now that I sit here and talk about it. It
sounds fantastic. But yes, there is a very clear structure at [organisation] to distinguish between private and work life.

Influencing factors that might partly account for differences in how organisations deal with boundaries and the individual’s private time could be the cause of the organisation (some are more time-sensitive) or the degree of bureaucratisation. I did not find any indication that it might be related to a lack of resources, and to be fair, all NGOs are more or less stretched to the limit in this respect. When Adam and I discussed other potential employers, his major concern when working for another employer would be the potential expectation to be available more often, if he wanted the degree of responsibility he has at the moment in his current position.

Frank describes a well-developed respect within his organisation for the individual’s private time. He has just one mobile phone with a flat-rate, and his argument was that he would buy his own mobile phone if he received calls in his free-time, but it had not happened in the eight years he had worked there. His organisation is one of the few that have very clearly defined temporal boundaries for work.

In the following section my participants provide more concrete examples of how they themselves, their colleagues and their bosses create and contribute to greater boundary permeability.

Ebba is quite clear that she consciously avoids frequent after-work activities with her colleagues, because for her the link to work is too strong and it would be difficult to let go of it, though she emphasises that she does like them.

Arthur does not mind meeting his colleagues in his free time, but he would not want to have colleagues exclusively as friends. He argues that there needs to be another part of life to retreat to, in case work causes distress or worries.

On the other hand there are some NGO employees that work in the field and are intimately connected to and dependent on their colleagues for emotional support and also as friends. As a result of the lack of outside contacts and the extremely demanding nature of their work, a greater degree of intimacy is almost impossible to avoid. When asked about time without his colleagues, Danton laughs and answers ‘[s]leeping. Even though it may happen that people also sleep with their colleagues, but that’s not what we are doing right now in [city of assignment].’

There are clear differences between what is considered acceptable behaviour for a colleague and a boss. When you are the boss there are simply certain expectations in regard to your behaviour. Danton explains:

Yeah, I’m very lucky because I have a beautiful team and lovely colleagues, so I’m very lucky. However, I’m their boss, so this is
something you don’t forget. You can’t completely… even though
I’m quite laid back and I love to make fun of them and that, they
make fun of me and that, we… even really happy just to shock
them or whatever, but anyway, you still have your position written
on your forehead.

Being the boss changes the relationship with colleagues, and Holly remarks
that it also changes expectations that are resting on you. She says:

It is quite different, and there are greater expectations regarding
availability for those of us who have a managerial position and
those who don’t.

Bosses might have higher expectations for availability placed on them,
while their behaviour simultaneously is scrutinised in a different way. Kathryn
gives an example of her boss contacting her on Facebook over Christmas:

[It was] something he thought he absolutely needed to know, but
I didn’t answer his e-mail. I ignored it completely, and when I
came back to the USA I told him that this doesn’t work for me, I
am on vacation and don’t answer your e-mails – e-mails you send
to my work mail, but it’s not okay to message me on Facebook,
because I am on vacation.

Kathryn expressed during our interview that she understands when outside
stakeholders contact her on Facebook that they are worried and need answers
right away. They might not know she is on vacation or in which time zone
she works in, etc. It does not bother her the slightest, and she just asks her col-
leagues to take care of it, if it cannot wait. Her boss, however, is the one person
who needs to respect these boundaries, and she has no tolerance whatsoever
for transgressions coming from a higher level of the hierarchy, who clearly
should know when she is on vacation or which time zone is relevant.

Employees and managers made me aware of a mismatch between what is
directly communicated and what is subtly conveyed in terms of expectations.
Jill explained that ‘I get to hear that “this is not necessary” from my current
boss. I had a boss before who mailed at 11pm, and when I came in 9am she
expected me to know about it.’ Talking about the same boss and a discus-
sion about what she expects of her, Jill recalls that ‘she also said “maybe you
shouldn’t answer, then.” Yeah, but you behave in such a way that I, through
my behaviour, need to check what it is you have, what is on your mind right
now.’

Jill problematised this mismatch between what is said and what is commu-
nicated through behaviour with her former boss, but she could not resolve the
problem in a satisfactory way. She recalls the rather inconclusive conversation with her former boss:

But she said “if it is something important, I am going to send you a text.” Yeah, but that means I then have to sit there with my mobile on the weekend and check if a text is coming, or how shall that work? Because if I don’t see it, it doesn’t matter how important it is, because nothing is going to happen. That means we are on call at weekends and evenings waiting for a text. “No, that’s not how we can have it, you aren’t on call.” No, but how did you think that this should work? Your solution doesn’t work.

The idea of contact being initiated after hours, when it is “important,” is extremely persistent and widespread, but Matteo points out the fundamental problem with this assumption, in that ‘[y]ou can always argue “is that important?” because you can’t do anything about it, but it could be important for peace of mind.’ This shows that there is a certain interpretation-based freedom when it comes to determining what is “important” and what is not.

People are, at least to a certain degree, aware of other people’s needs and the consequences of their own actions. Holly says that it is extremely easy for her to just “switch on and off” with work, so she often works in the evenings or weekends. But she tries to be considerate, ‘if I see that it comes from a person who is going to be very stressed and nervous about me answering on a Saturday. I try to remember to let it be, because not everyone finds it as easy as I do to switch off. This is why you have to think a bit so that it doesn’t become this way. I have an easy time switching on and off, but my way of working shouldn’t force others to switch on, especially if they can’t switch off when it is the weekend. So I try to avoid answering, because I pretty much know who it is.’

Holly also exhibits great insight when she reasons that ‘sometimes I think that as a boss you underestimate the importance of what you do. [...] if I say you don’t need to check just because I’ve written something. It becomes the opposite effect if you sit and mail-bomb people anyway.’ She admits that she did not understand initially why people did not ignore her messages. Holly explains that she very often writes e-mails at 1am but selects their recipients very carefully.

She was the only participant in this study to employ the option of writing in the subject line to inform people when they should look at an e-mail (after a vacation, on Monday), and her impression was that she saw an improvement in her communication. I have no information regarding her colleagues’ perspectives, but concluding from the stories of my other participants this could be a fruitful way of communicating, as expectations are very clearly communicated
and they do not seem unreasonable.

When differentiating between e-mails and social technology in terms of availability, Holly points out ‘I think people perceive it [Facebook] as one’s private space that one [also] uses for work. e-mails are work.’

If people wish to connect with colleagues and their boss on Facebook, it can be very different. Frank connects with people he knows, and Marlow sees his colleagues as friends, so it is natural to also connect on Facebook, whereas Adam feels he already spends eight hours a day with his colleagues and so there is no need to connect online.

When receiving requests from colleagues, some perceive it as very difficult to reject them, because the other person could feel unappreciated, and in the workplace there is an incentive to keep people reasonably happy. Ida elaborates that a request on, for example, Facebook implies that the person wants to get in contact. If she refuses the request, it might feel like she does not value the other person, and this is why she does not refuse to connect online.

Overall, for the majority of participants, there is a difference between connecting with colleagues, and in particular their boss. Joshua explains that he has his colleagues on his Facebook (‘my colleagues are also my friends’) but not his boss, as she is the one who determines his salary and they are ‘not on the same level’.

Marilyn gives the example of interns who would contact her after hours and could not distinguish between personal and professional at all, which led to her feeling ‘that was a little weird – having them as friends on Facebook.’ At the same time as connecting with colleagues, it is considered acceptable they can also be a source of frustration if they manage their boundaries significantly better than oneself, as Isabel and Marcus explain.

Colleagues, on the other hand, can also be one of the reasons why people overwork – especially when they feel their colleagues could become irritated if they do not take care of everything immediately. This can go as far as dealing with e-mails during vacations and over weekends. Molly explains:

I think that is an outside pressure. People around me at work get irritated if I don’t, then they get stressed if I don’t deal with things right away.

This example also highlights the vicious circle people create when they engage with work-related activities and e-mails during non-work times. Even though they argue they would not send, for example, e-mails to people that do not work like them, they still create an atmosphere of constant availability and overwork. Through their behaviour, it indirectly becomes the norm rather than the exception.
Another way of looking at after-hours working emphasises the advantages that this kind of behaviour can bring in the form of an extremely responsive and always-on-top-of-things organisation. Simultaneously, the individual gains the opportunity to accommodate competing demands and experience very fluid boundaries, thereby potentially enabling them to incorporate all personality aspects into one identity.

Clara reasons that overwork and increasing availability are not caused by some kind of group dynamic, as one might find in the private sector, where you have to work in a certain way otherwise you do not belong there. A fairly recent example would be investment bankers, who regularly work more than 80 hours a week and just go home for a shower before returning to their workplace. Clara insists on the lack of such a dynamic. A very reasonable observation, it still leaves me wondering how far the idea of limited resources and fighting for a good cause together with some people creates difficulties in living up to standards and fosters a similar dynamic, even though it might be argued for and supported differently.

5.1.3 Individual expectations

Up to this point I have presented expectations that can be allocated to the external environment beyond the organisation and organisational expectations, with both pushing for greater availability and integration. Individual expectations are directed towards more personal time and greater segmentation, albeit not necessarily towards less availability, as Jacob explains:

That kind of thinking has changed a bit since I got to be a parent, because it feels like I need more free time, or at least the total amount of time that you have to do work – I wouldn’t mind if it was less. I would still like to stay connected, but it is still different if you need it to just keep an eye on things or if you have to work and actually write stuff. (Jacob)

Apart from a partner, there are children that demand attention. Interestingly enough, sometimes it might actually be wished for to reduce working time (and with it, of course, the amount of tasks and responsibilities) in favour of having more free time. Jacob does not argue for less connectivity, though, as he makes a distinction between working, i.e. actually producing things (e.g. reports, strategies), and simply keeping track of what is happening. This gives an indication as to why work popping up on social technologies might not be perceived as work per se by everyone – you do not have to actually produce any output; it is more a question of keeping track and making sure that no harm is being done to the organisation.
On the one hand people understand that there will or needs to be a certain spillover between work and private life, which can go both ways, as Clara, Tanja, Jacob and Joshua point out; for instance, partner or another family member might expect to be able to reach the person during the work day. Part of this issue involves sharing responsibilities and organising a household (with children, the need seems to be more pronounced):

Yeah... and most likely in Google chat, it is the easiest way. We usually run in and out of meetings; it is kind of easy and usually it is more things like remembering to tell people at the daycare centre that she will be late tomorrow, or whatever. Stuff like that, practical. (Jacob)

Sandra also confirms this in-between, quick contact for sorting out practical matters.

The other aspect of this border crossing is the search for or the expectation of personal intimacy. People see their constant availability not just as a possible one-way street, where work intrudes into private time, but where the private is almost expected to “visit” during work time. For some this contact is very important because they might not live together, as Clara mentions. For Tanja, having Facebook open is a way of having this invisible but constant connection to friends, a form of proximity to one’s personal life.

This is, of course, also possible via the phone, but this is more intrusive, as Sandra posits when saying that her mother calls her regularly, which can be a bit frustrating at times. There is no guarantee that this is a friction-free negotiation of how much contact is acceptable or wished for.

At the same time, there is certain degree of understanding that work might spill over, because it is seen as being very important. Clara explains that her partner understands if work comes up during private time, because what she does is considered important. Rachel explains that she has always pursued her goals and that her partner never complains about her going to the office on a Saturday.

Isabel did not experience the same support from her partner and mentioned him complaining about her working so much and not having dinner together during the week. It seems that in order to ensure the healthy long-term prospects of a relationship with someone working for an NGO, both partners need to be on board and accept that work spills over every now and then.

The whole situation and expectations change completely when the partner works in the same organisation. This, however, seems to be more likely for people that work in the field. Part of the reason is that the work is so special that people need an equally special kind of support from their partner, as mentioned by all of the field workers in this study, because the work is so different that it
is difficult to explain it to someone who has not experienced it. When asked about her partner’s understanding of her work, Nelly explains:

He does the same [laughs]. So we are both at the same organisation. So that helps a lot. He understands exactly what I am going through and the questions, the doubts you have about what to do. So he is very supportive, actually.

Working in the field poses the additional challenge of negotiating this issue with a potential partner. The work is dangerous (and becoming increasingly more so), and people left behind in the home country need a lot of reassurance regarding what is happening. Aston mentions:

There is someone in Geneva that I need to clarify things with, and it will depend also on this person once again, because if it appears that I have found the love of my life, the decision to go into the field will not only be mine.

On the other hand, despite the general understanding that needs to be in place, people do expect to have time off, in order to recharge. Marcus explains that working too much ‘certainly affects my private life – I mean, it does – and also I am not happy unless I am able to have some time off and do some of the other things that I like to do.’ People also have partners that expect them to be present and have time off. When talking about checking his phone in bed, he says ‘I try to wait until she has got out to bed. I usually do [laughs]. She is not happy, you can imagine. No, I usually wait until she gets up.’ He is very frank when he tells me:

I know if I continue like this it will end with a divorce at some point, because it’s not possible to live with someone who is never there. I mean, a relationship is about seeing and being and, you know, being there for each other. And if one person is working all the time it’s not really good anyway.

Even in countries with great daycare facilities, people have to leave work earlier on some days, which puts additional strain on their time but also relates back to Jacob, who suggested that simply reducing working time would be an appreciated change in his working life. The sample is too small to draw conclusions about whole cultures, but from statistics we know that the burden of child rearing is shared more equally in Scandinavia, for example, than in Germany.

The Swedish parents in my study share responsibilities either daily or at some point across the week, even separated couples, whereas not all German parents experienced the same sharing culture. Molly explains:
Since I have kids, I leave work at, like, three or four some days, and then I don’t have time to finish everything so I need to spend a lot of time in the evenings and on the weekends working.

Abby confirms that she worked longer hours without children because there was no point in going home during the evening. Jill clarifies for me that having a child allows her to set boundaries, when she says ‘it’s not about me, what I want to do with my time. I need to go home, because the daycare closes and it is easier to put up boundaries for what is work and what is not work.’ It is about being present, being with the children (people) you are have and setting a good example, as Stella points out.

Figure 5.1 visualises the complex relationship that different spheres of life have with each other. The infinite loop is used in information systems (systems theory) and mathematics to signify, for example, an unproductive loop, but in this dissertation it is used exclusively as a visualisation of the constant negotiation of the relationship between work and private life.

In both realms, work and private, the individual engages in a multitude of activities, some of which are mediated by technologies. Furthermore, some of these technologies, in the case of my participants, are the same for both realms. This is expressed by the thin line running through the whole infinite loop, indicating that we use a certain technology for personal purposes and for work purposes, and neither of these activities needs to be bound by either time or place. Social technologies mediate the connection between both spheres, and it can be quite challenging for people to cut it off.

Part of this use of social technologies involves personal choice for one’s own benefit. Other aspects of its use are “subtly” encouraged, or quite directly suggested, as an extension of one’s engagement with work. It was not necessarily an outspoken point, but many of the participants in this study expressed expectations originating from either the organisation or external parties.

Simultaneously, there are expectations from one’s personal network about not working all the time or bringing work into a certain realm. Being a family member picking up the slack when the partner is working while the children should be taken to bed can be frustrating.

The curved line in the middle of the infinite loop represents the enactment of boundaries in which people engage. It is not a straight line clearly defined by time and space; instead, it is dynamic, adjusted according to external and personal preferences.

People engage in different strategies to enact or negotiate this boundary (if considering time, place and psychology as independent levels, one could argue that multiple boundaries are negotiated) between work and private life, which will be presented in subsection 5.2.
Figure 5.1: The infinite loop of negotiating boundaries between work and private life

5.2 Blurring boundaries

In this section I will present my participants’ reasoning around boundary enactment and the blurring thereof. Table 5.2 provides an overview with examples of different sources or initiators of blurring boundaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual’s intentional boundary blurring</td>
<td>‘I wake up at 7 and then sometimes I check my e-mail before I go to work, so I just open the computer and check while the kids are having breakfast. [...] We get home at, like, 5:30, 6, I open the computer, check if something has happened, close it, cook for them, we have dinner, we watch TV, open the computer [laughs] and then hang with them for a bit and then they go to bed at 8.’ (Molly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I have my private FB with me the whole working day and I sit and talk with my friends during the day.’ (Tanja)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Quotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Basically I use FB privately, but I use it maybe say 20-30% and share job-related things. I mean, things that are connected with my job – today, for example, I shared something that [organisation] put on their FB page, so I share that [post].’ (Heli)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘So they use social media a lot; for example, you write a politician a message on Twitter, a tweet storm with a particular message. That’s of course re-tweeted and so on.’ (Arthur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘But on Facebook I also share private stuff, too, mixing it a bit [...] it is private stuff or private stuff that is connected to culture, like street art or something like that. It is not... and I think that since energy politics is so damn dry, no one would follow you if you were only able to post about that – well, some maybe.’ (Isabel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I mix work and private channels completely. I use one Twitter account for work and private. For me it’s a lot easier. I mean, I am the same human being that I am at work when I am at home.’ (Jacob)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External boundary blurring</td>
<td>‘I think the chat overall is very stressful, so I use it very much when I want a quick reply, but I do know that, when a chat window pops up, I do become very stressed.’ (Stella)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘You can see people even though you are not friends; you can get so many information, because if I had the time I would have separated it more. But, I mean, you have only 24 hours a day, so instead of doing that, a clear separation of private life-work life, it’s just that work life becomes part of your private life and you just have to balance it.’ [laughs] (Marcus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Quotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Some things get easier but many [increase the] demands on oneself. When one is out in the field, you think: now that I am sitting and waiting here for 10 minutes I might as well check my mail.’ (Melissa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘With people that use these social technologies in a compatible way. So, they also have the opportunity professionally, for example, in addition to the job to chat once in a while.’ (Arthur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Nowadays all my colleagues Facebook and they’re on Facebook every day and every night – they upload their wall or whatever you call it. So folks around the world immediately know what they are up to, where they are at, what they are doing.’ (Parker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational boundary blurring</td>
<td>‘We have such big issues that we are working on that we need to be somewhat available after hours also.’ (Marcus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Please, all of you, can you post this on your Facebook?’ (Matthew)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘It can, of course, become a bit ambiguous there. On the one hand I am, of course, private or personal in my leisure time, like “Wow! Now I will be working with this – fun!” and it is not my job to do that. But at the same time I might use Facebook to get in contact with people or chat with people or to write e-mails to people or to write things on Facebook that I as an individual would never write, which has to do with my job really.’ (Sandra)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘If I was a manager then I wouldn’t start e-mailing people off hours, out of principle. I’d put them in my outbox and send them in the morning [...] just to create normalisation, like this is work hours and this is free time.’ (Molly)

‘I will post, for instance, if there are articles about what we do. If the [organisation] has posted articles on the Internet I will post them on Facebook, so it’s very linked to the work.’ (Aston)

‘I think that is an outside pressure. That people around me at work get irritated if I don’t, then they get stressed if I don’t deal with things right away.’ (Molly)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘If I was a manager then I wouldn’t start e-mailing people off hours, out of principle. I’d put them in my outbox and send them in the morning [...] just to create normalisation, like this is work hours and this is free time.’ (Molly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I will post, for instance, if there are articles about what we do. If the [organisation] has posted articles on the Internet I will post them on Facebook, so it’s very linked to the work.’ (Aston)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I think that is an outside pressure. That people around me at work get irritated if I don’t, then they get stressed if I don’t deal with things right away.’ (Molly)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Different initiators of boundary blurring

In subsection 5.2.3, examples are given as to why people feel – and disagree on how – they would like to disconnect from their work. Marilyn acknowledges that the two spheres of work and private life are moving closer together and that boundaries are becoming more blurred, but she also explains:

I think it is not an optimal situation to let them go together that much – the private stuff and work. I think, purely philosophically, this can’t be good that I feel my focus is diverting away from my kids when I am home to something work-related. (Marilyn)

Marcus echoes her feelings when he describes how this blurring can be a struggle for people when they do not know how to deal with technologies:

I think, at least in my experience with smartphones, I think that I have a feeling that a lot of people are struggling on deciding when not to work and when to work, ’cause I can see when they are sending e-mails and messages and when they are working and when they are twittering or whatever. (Marcus)

Isabel explains that, for her, private life and work have moved closer together with the help of these technologies, especially Facebook, because ‘one works with one’s friends, one uses the network one has.’ For her, everything ‘has
become more fluid in terms of what is job and what is private, and it all mixes together in social media.’

Stella uses her private network for work as well, and she describes that the particular nature of activities on social media makes it very difficult to distinguish between the two spheres:

But it’s just these small comments that fall into the general flow. I don’t know the boundary, I don’t […] know where I draw my boundary. I don’t know if I have any boundaries. Often I think it’s so easy that it’s not really worth discussing, but I know at the same time that it is work-related.

She clarifies that the boundary is permeable and that she does receive private messages on Facebook during the day as well. Frank, who as a person finds it very to let go of work, explains that the two spheres move closer together on Facebook and Twitter, even for him. This indicates that it might not just be a matter of personal preference or personality but that something is happening on and with these platforms that s responsible for changing these boundaries.

Justification

The participants in this study gave good reasons for why the blurring of boundaries makes sense in their specific case. Isabel says that it is very difficult not to be found by private contacts, if one uses their real name. One of the most dominant reasons for mixing, and consequently censoring oneself, is given by Marcus when he explains that privacy is basically dead:

You can see people, even though you are not friends – you can get so much information – but if I had had the time I would have separated more. But, I mean, you have only 24 hours a day, so instead of doing that, clearly separating private-work life, it’s just that work life becomes part of your private life and you just have to balance it [laughs]. (Marcus)

One of the reasons for using Facebook rather than e-mail to contact certain people is the often instant response one receives, as Isabel points out, in that both she and Melissa manage to book meetings that might otherwise take weeks to organise. In Melissa’s recollection of an encounter with a politician, it becomes clear that Facebook alleviates contact, as it lowers the threshold; it is less formal and less official. Heli adds that in having politicians and decision-makers on Facebook, and posting work-related things, there is the hope that she can, if not influence, at least inform them and provide them with ideas.
A related aspect is the need to make one’s profile interesting for one’s contacts, but doing that and adding people takes time. Stella explains that just posting work-related things under a work profile in a way defeats the purpose of the platform, while Kathryn simply argues that if you befriend her on such a platform, you have to take her as she is, with all the personal things she posts, and this is exactly what Stella, Isabel and Melissa argue makes a profile interesting, these personal snippets, the window into the actual person and not just the role. Isabel says that the work she does is ‘so very dry, so nobody would follow you if you just wrote about it; well, yes, some might’, though clearly not the people she actually wants to reach.

Some organisations live by very strict rules regarding transparency, so their members cannot be anonymous on these platforms. For Clara this is just how things, are and therefore it is not surprising that she uses Twitter for both private interests and for work-related matters. Given her impressive amount of followers, this is a clear asset for the organisation.

The second reason why people mix these two spheres of life in the way they do, is given by Aston, who explains:

It’s just who I am. The conception, as you say, the one who wants to do good. It’s the conception of the world. At the same time I realise I cannot put any comment on Facebook, any superficial statement. It’s something that, I can with friends, I can make a joke if they post something, but myself, spontaneously, a superficial statement like “It’s raining” a little complaint of the people I don’t know, I can no longer do, because it doesn’t make sense for me right now. (Aston)

Engagement can be a very deeply personal matter, as in Aston’s case, but it can also find expression in small actions, such as Jill describing:

There were potentially bad things leaking to the media on Monday. When I saw that, I couldn’t just sit there and think I didn’t see that. So I sent an e-mail: “Did you see that?” “Yes,” I received as a reply. And that was 6pm on a Sunday night, 6 or 8. Then I let it go, but I couldn’t pretend I hadn’t seen it.

Adam uses his personal Twitter account to report from a panel discussion he attends, so that the organisation’s account does not become overburdened with less important things. The account is for ‘the important things’. Adam does not mind using his personal resources for the organisation, if it helps, even though his organisation is one of the few with rather clear boundaries in this respect.
Stella reflects that it is not particularly surprising that activists sometimes contact her on Facebook, as she uses it a lot in her work, but she still sometimes asks them to write to her work e-mail anyway. She reasons that ‘I think that is very boundary-less. I would never do that with someone I am in contact with for my job.’ Joshua, on the other hand, reasons that answering an activist’s question on Facebook outside his regular working times is no problem, and he does it if it is an easy question. Occasionally, though he will ask the other person to contact him at work.

Ebba and Arthur’s responses to the question “if” and “why” they post work-related things indicate the importance of the alignment between individual and organisational values. Arthur and Ebba explain that they do post links to actions they really support and believe in, but that this behaviour naturally changes the nature of their boundaries. Arthur says in this respect that ‘I try to keep it separate, but it’s difficult.’

Matthew describes the social process that encourages him and other colleagues to post things: ‘[a]t times, when we think this is really good, someone may post “Please, all of you, can you post this on your Facebook?” which he just does, because he would post things anyway.

5.2.1 Constraining

In the following subsections I will present how my participants describe and experience technological affordances, not only in constraining ways, but also in enabling ways. Constraints can be felt on an interpersonal level (how people perceive changes in relation to their interactions with other people). When people are busy updating, chatting and reading, they have less time for deep engagement with people with whom they might otherwise prefer to interact. Certain features can also be perceived as constraining (how specific functions could hinder the individual from doing things in their preferred way), not only on the level of the actual hardware (computers and smartphones), but also single platforms and how they communicate with the user via notifications and reminders.

Interpersonal level

When we discussed the use of lists, or in how far they experience any restrictions as to what they can post, Isabel pointed to a more fundamental restriction she had observed:

What happens to a certain degree, which is scary, is that people adjust their lives, because they know everyone around them has mobile cameras and that one can get caught on a picture. So that
one limits one’s freedom in reality, so that they avoid posting the wrong type of picture.

For Ida, there is overall too much information shared on Facebook. She likes to look at what some people have been up to, but certainly not to the degree to which information is offered to her. Also, Ebba criticises a fundamental characteristic of Facebook when saying ‘I hate about Facebook that everything is so conflict-free, but I suppose that is how they want it. Nice and fluffy, everyone is nice to everyone and there’s no fighting.’

Calvin and Sandra both note that being constantly online is detrimental in terms of full engagement with the actual task at hand and in terms of disengagement with work. Sandra explains:

If one is doing something and chatting, one is not fully engaged in what one was doing but instead one is chatting and doing other things at the same time. I feel it can take a long time when one actually wants concentrated time with the other person.

Sandra simply feels there are too many demands placed on the individual, which takes away from the time one can possibly allocate for engaging with others. For Calvin, technology (in this case a Blackberry) enslaves people and prevents them from disconnecting from their work. He argues that technology that affords this ubiquitous connection, whereas in the past, people might have still thought about work but they could not have done anything it anyway.

Melissa relates to this notion when she explains that even the activities in which she is involved have become more splintered, and instead of paying full attention to, for example, the seminar she is sitting in, she will tweet a good quote and quickly check if anyone has e-mailed anything about the meeting later:

So some of these, you know, things, but it’s that some things get easier, but quite many also mean that one puts higher demands on oneself. When one is out in the field, you think: now that I am sitting and waiting here for 10 minutes I might as well check my mail. So one is pulled into work compared with like it is now, like I take my book which I have in the backpack and maybe read a bit while waiting 10 minutes, which I actually think is nicer, more relaxing, fun that one can find a moment to read during the day instead of, you know, sitting and checking work mail. (Melissa)

Constraints on the interpersonal level prevent people from fully engaging not only with others, but also with the tasks they are presently doing. On an interpersonal level people can perceive interactions mediated by technology as
constraining their personal freedom. Marilyn describes the relationship with her interns at work:

They would contact me when I was free, via chat and these things, but they really couldn’t distinguish between private and professional. So these were the only times when it felt a bit weird to have them as Facebook friends.

Even regular colleagues can complicate matters when they send friend requests and the individual is not really interested but feels at the same time it would be awkward to reject the request, as Molly and Ida explained.

Technological level

Different technologies have different affordances that can be perceived quite differently by the individual. Jacob describes his experiences with the push function many platforms use:

I kind of like the push, but I have learnt, since there are so many things that push, I have to push with selected mute. I try to mute the things that I don’t need to push, so I like to get everything I am actually interested in through push, but I try to go away with as much noise as possible. There can be a lot of “push noise,” in the sense that you get a lot of notifications on things you are not really interested in, and it is the same stuff every time. Some of these things are impossible to turn off, but a lot of them are... you can work quite a lot with notifications on different programs to get the noise that you want. (Jacob)

Isabel refers to the Skype “ping” as being quite intrusive, as she uses the programme a lot in her work but at the same time cannot control it in a sophisticated way when others use it to contact her. In comparison to e-mails, which are asynchronous, Skype is a synchronous channel of communication. Isabel initially also expected to use Facebook exclusively for work, but as she herself puts it ‘that didn’t work out.’

Stella experiences the chat function in Gmail (her organisation uses the enterprise function) as similarly stressful:

I think the chat, overall, is very stressful, so I use it very much when I want a quick reply. I do know that, when a chat window pops up, I do become very stressed. I become very disturbed by it, but at the same time I believe it is a good way to communicate. It is like something in between a phone call and an e-mail. (Stella)
Tanja highlights another difficulty with these platforms and their respective applications for tablets and smartphones. When the platform decides something important has happened, it informs the user via a notification which comes with a sound and also an almost physical manifestation in the form of a small red dot, which can be quite offensive. The more pressing problem, though, is that if you want the notification to go away, you have to look at the message or whatever it notifies you about. Tanja says that once you have looked at it, you need to deal with it immediately, because there is no function to mark something as unread, and with the fast pace of Facebook and Twitter, things just disappear. Jill echoes this struggle:

The problem with Twitter is that you will find a link, and either you e-mail it to yourself or you e-mail it to whom you want to interact with concerning the issue. And that is likely after 5 o’clock.

Related struggles with hidden or difficult-to-find functions, especially on Facebook, are described by Clara, Ida and Stella. Once, when on a tidying-up-Facebook mission, it took Clara a good while to figure out how to “unfriend” people, which is not surprisingly more difficult than befriending people, even though it must be said that accessibility has improved significantly since 2012.

Ida was completely surprised when I asked her about using lists and blocking information from certain people she is not overly interested in. Stella, on the other hand, is aware that there should be a function to limit the audience for a certain post, even when using the mobile Facebook app, but given that she cannot figure out how to do it, she simply posts everything for everyone to see (which is not her preferred default).

Frank had encountered two difficulties, one on a hardware level and one on a platform level. When he acquired a tablet for personal use he wanted to synchronise the calendars, in order to prevent professional and private events colliding:

So then I took the tablet to work, because I did not understand how I could get it to sync, so the computer department helped me to sync. But then all contacts and e-mail also came, work contacts and job-mail came onto the tablet. But it was not good, so I quickly turned it off because I just wanted the calendar to be synced.

The other problem he encountered was to do with being connected with his employer on Facebook and those moments when his employer posted something and people commented and he ‘accidentally’ looked at these comments: “I see 61 comments and wonder what they have written, and so I press and then the comments appear and work becomes very present.”
Melissa finally ended up in an official “Facebook relationship” when she confirmed the Facebook request sent by her partner to confirm that they were together as a couple. She confirmed the request because she expected the information to be found exclusively on her partner’s profile, but she was mistaken. Melissa reasons:

And it was not, when I realised “right”, but OK it can be posted there. I had not grasped that it worked like that, and it’s not that I tried to hide it, but I was a bit... I was not sure I believed it to be relevant. I thought people that do not know me have no business in my relationship status at all, but now it is visible there. (Melissa)

Finally, Kathryn describes a very common problem in all kinds of organisations concerning administrative rights to an organisation’s Facebook page. In order to be an “admin” on a Facebook page, one needs to befriend another admin, which in a work context would most likely be one’s colleague or boss. Kathryn explained:

I had this discussion with two interns which had just started here, because for them becoming admins for our page meant they had to become friends with one of us, so that we could add them.

In Marlow’s case his organisation has a Facebook page and wants to participate in the discussions of another group on Facebook. He explains: ‘Now [the organisation] wants to be in that group and talk, but it is me, though. It is people in the group.’ There is no proper detachment possible – it is the individual who has to participate in group discussions on Facebook on the organisation’s behalf. Isabel mentioned that the groups she joined for her work flood her timeline with work-related information and notifications, even at weekends, and so there is no escaping. In other words, proper, clear-cut separation is not possible unless one uses different profiles or platforms.

The struggles described herein are partly caused by the actual features of the technology, but they can also be brought on by a very user-unfriendly interface that makes it unnecessarily difficult to choose one’s preferred configuration.

5.2.2 Enabling

What I refer to when using the term “enabling” is how people perceive the technology, how they make sense of it and if they feel it is helping them rather than hindering. This can happen again on an interpersonal level when people feel their different identities come closer together and enable them to do things they want to do. Secondly, it can find expression in changes to how people work, i.e. how they are enabled to do their work differently.
Interpersonal level

Despite attempted commercialisation by big corporations, social technologies have one fundamental function: to connect people, to enable them to interact with each other in the digital space. Jacob expresses his deep-rooted appreciation for social technologies by explaining that ‘[social media] makes it easier to have contacts with so many more people than I could otherwise, because it would be impossible to have a satisfactory level of engagement with people if I had to do it in other ways. Now I can just make a quick comment on someone’s page and they remember me, and then we remain in contact.’ For Jacob, these technologies are a way not only to keep in contact with interesting people, but also to contact people he otherwise would find it difficult to reach, due to perceived “social barriers”:

I mix work and private channels completely. I use one Twitter account for work and private. For me it’s a lot easier. I mean, I am the same human being that I am at work when I am at home. It would be kind of hard to – or weird – to use one Twitter account at home and one at work. Especially when you work with social media, the beginning and end of work is so hard to really define, because you answer [the organisation’s] tweets during the evening or nights, or whatever. We have an official Twitter account for the whole organisation as well, but sometimes you want to do it as the person behind it, and of course that is the same account that I use for private reasons. So, for me, it is pretty much integrated into my life and the way I live. (Jacob)

For Jacob, the specific form or kind of platform is irrelevant, but what is important is that they allow him to stay in contact with people he finds interesting. He continues by describing different circles he belongs to and how social technologies enable him to keep connected, even though he is no longer a full member – a sentiment that is mirrored by Sandra when referring to Facebook connections she has not met in 15 years.

Aston, who works in the field, experiences a similar upside of belonging without being able to participate physically in different circles or activities. Clara vehemently defends the use of social technologies by pointing out that in the past one would write an e-mail once a week, but the more instant technologies allow an ‘interaction with the other’ and to participate in the life of the other. For Clara, people are fundamentally social beings, and the dissolution of lifelong bonds in small communities lets people search for other ways of connecting and recreating some kind of social fabric.

Arthur points to an important condition regarding the enabling affordances of social technologies connecting people more frequently. He explains that
social technologies have simplified his personal life but that this is dependent on other people having a similar user pattern. A form of simplification exists only ‘with people that use these social technologies in a compatible way. So they also have the opportunity professionally, for example, in addition to the job, to chat once in a while.’ Communication, and the ability to be more social and to interact, is to a certain degree dependent on people being on the other side, to receive information and then to reply. Joshua, in the same way as Alex, perceives this ability to take small micro-breaks as contributing to fostering comfort at work, in that it makes their work ‘more fun’.

Heli, as with most participants, experiences at least short interruptions at work through intrusions made by her personal life, which leads her to conclude that there is a certain amount of ‘freedom in the limitless – to a certain degree at least.’ Arthur is also quite clear that he does not want this strict distinction and that he wants to feel like a ”human” at work.

The contact Jacob has with his partner during the day has become easier. As Heli explained, when referring to the contact she has with her partner during the day, there is just not enough time in the morning and evening to talk about everything and organise family life, so these technologies facilitate certain parts of their life outside work. Kathryn shares a similar routine with her partner, using a chat function to keep contact without disturbing the other.

Parker exemplifies how social technologies in the field can help people to build a basic kind of rapport with those back home that is not necessarily dependent on a specific platform but more on the ease of communication. He explains:

> Nowadays, all my colleagues Facebook and they’re on Facebook every day and every night uploading their wall, or however you call it. So folks around the world immediately know what they are up to, where they are at, what they are doing. I just do it via e-mail or Skype. (Parker)

When describing how to keep a romantic relationship alive, Parker described that different means of communication can fulfil different functions, and a greater variety of channels can be beneficial.

> Because you sometimes say things, you write things you wouldn’t say. Or let’s say I was in Afghanistan, she was in the U.S., and it’s also a way of creating desire via the written word as opposed to the spoken word. So you try to work with what you have, in order to establish some sort of sense of normalcy. So what I couldn’t do being physically next to her, I tried to recreate via the written word as I Skype with her, as I talk with her. You know what I mean? (Parker)
Unexpected as it might be, Aston describes his way of using Facebook as a seductive tool and how he deepened his relationship with his current partner by using this platform, albeit involuntarily.

Yes, but what is funny is that finally the channels, we weren’t together, and it’s through these channels that we developed a relationship, which is completely crazy and I am not keen on going back, but I have no other choice. I prefer to be in front of the person and to invite them to have a drink, but here I am just sending a fucking Facebook message. (Aston)

Aston even sees the way of documenting one’s life on Facebook as ‘cathartic’, a way to keep in touch with one’s identity.

You know what you are, what your identity is, and to confront this identity all the time and to maintain and to share this experience, this extraordinary experience through photos, through all these things. I put the Blue Mosque, the citadel, it’s also, OK I shared that, and once it’s shared I don’t have the frustration that I cannot share it and that people won’t know what I have done in my life. (Aston)

Nelly tries to contact people back home about once every two weeks, and her partner every day, by using Skype and text messages, but additionally she uses the internal communications platform of her organisation (which is a bit like Skype) that has the great advantage of connecting her with colleagues from former assignments.

When working for organisations that are driven by ideas and common values as opposed to return on investment maximisation, it is not surprising that multiple participants pointed out that they are friends with their colleagues and really appreciate the opportunity to learn more about them by being connected on Facebook. Melissa elucidates:

I think it’s nice, because those colleagues I am friends with on Facebook are those that I am friends with in reality, so I think it is, yeah, I think it is nice to know.

Rachel, even though she is exclusively connected with her colleagues on Facebook and has no private contacts, sees Facebook and the insights she gains as ‘enrichment’, because she gets to know a tiny bit about the private side of her colleagues, but this approach would of course prove futile if everyone used Facebook in the same way as she does, i.e. exclusively in a professional way. This stands in stark contrast to the approach of Kathryn, who argues that if
one befriends her on Facebook, they have to take the good with the evil – and the Saturday night beer. Her Facebook is a very colourful mix of volunteers, colleagues, the children for whom her organisation works, their parents and her own friends.

Jacob uses the chat function, belonging to the organisation’s e-mail system, to deepen the connection he has with his colleagues. He explains:

So, if you see someone online on their mail, and you think of something, or you just want to “spill some out.” If you think the boss did something stupid, or someone else did something stupid, you might just ask “What did you think about that?” and we have a conversation about that. Or it might just be just “Good work with that”. [...] It is actually quite an easy way to find the time to get to know your colleagues, and probably some of the colleagues I know best I learnt half of it through having that kind of contact with them. (Jacob)

Social technologies can also facilitate mundane, everyday social interactions in the office, as Melissa exemplifies by telling me about the Facebook post announcing chocolate at her colleague’s desk opposite to where she was sitting.

Frank, connected with a colourful mixture of people from all different life phases, considered deleting some of his colleagues from his Facebook but decided that it was quite nice to see their personal side. He also clarified that he would have no contact with a lot of them if it were not for Facebook enabling him to stay in touch. For Melissa and Marilyn, these technologies offer an opportunity to connect with the colleagues they consider friends anyway, so Melissa explained she wants to have the extra information one gets on Facebook.

Work level

When considering the enabling qualities of social technologies, possibly not surprisingly many of my participants related it to how their work has changed and become easier, or sometimes just different, through the use of social technologies. Marilyn even referred back to the time before social technologies when reflecting on what she preferred her boundaries to look like. She explained that ‘the worst anyone could do was check their e-mails’ after hours.

Clara similarly relates back to a time before social technologies, when you had a lot more freedom to do what you wanted after work, without having to worry about potential repercussions. In general, it can be said that my participants experienced that social technologies make their work easier in some regards, it changes how some things are done, and they create a kind of grey zone of work things that are not quite perceived as such.
Kathryn is especially appreciative of the possibilities Skype offers her when working with people across multiple time zones. Instead of hanging in her office until really late, she can go home at a decent time and just take the Skype call later, in between personal activities. Matteo points to the financial advantages his organisation enjoys through the use of a cheap communication channel. Joshua clarifies that the chat function in Facebook enables him to just quickly answer questions that members might have, thereby avoiding e-mails and phone calls.

As mentioned previously by Jacob, Melissa and Isabel, Facebook and Twitter are both significant assets for the lobbying and influencing in which most organisations engage. Isabel even points to the advantage of reaching people that think differently than she does. Melissa and Isabel both experience facilitation in gaining access to politicians and journalists, which makes part of their jobs easier. Melissa emphasises that no one has told her to have a Facebook profile, but she thinks that if she had not had Facebook ‘it would be perceived weird and a little dumb, because it is such a good network tool.’ Nonetheless, she also describes a boundary, in that it is encouraged to spread links, though no-one checks to see how much work-related matters have been posted. There is nevertheless encouragement to spread certain messages and to ‘help each other out’.

Facebook and Twitter make it easier, firstly, to contact members, as Sandra remarks, and secondly, to spread things without any great time investment, as Matteo explains: ‘[W]hen there is something good on Facebook I just grab that and repost it.’ Stella manages to find extra resources for her organisation just by posting a request on Facebook, but also, like Matteo and many others, she can spread information about events and activities organised by her employer. This course of action, however, also leads to her commenting on and sending links in her free time, simply because it is so easy. Both Jill and Marilyn mention how easy it is to re-tweet organisational tweets.

Sandra and Stella both reflect on the degree their profiles have become “workified”. Stella says that her profile would not be all ‘organisational’ if it were not for her working there, and the same goes for Sandra, as many of the things she posts or writes are work-related and she would never write them as a private person.

Sometimes work surfaces very directly on one’s Facebook profile, for which Melissa provides multiple examples. One especially interesting example is an encounter with a member of another group with potentially blurred boundaries, namely journalists. She was contacted by a former volunteer who now worked at a newspaper and offered space for a debate article, an offer which she subsequently forwarded to the right person within her organisation.

Given the global nature of most of the issues with which these NGOs work,
Marilyn describes as advantageous the constant flow of information caused by different time zones. In particular, spreading things after hours and at the weekends provides a greater impact for her organisation.

Some things have not become obviously easier – just different. Ida mentions that her organisation has started to tweet job advertisements, mainly via their official channels, but they are then often picked up by employees and re-tweeted. Compared to before, when ads had to be given to newspapers and paid for, this is a significant change in doing things. Abby sees the way people can easily organise themselves via social technologies as a huge improvement. At the same time, many organisers experience that just about 30% of people that “join” an event on Facebook actually show up on the day. Melissa is a little doubtful in regard to the usefulness of Twitter, as she wonders if it is ‘going to be the same group of people tweeting’ or if it will become more mainstream, widespread and almost mandatory for certain roles or professions.

Marilyn points to the very short reply time all organisations using social technologies are expected to deliver, especially on Friday evenings and weekends when people have time to engage with questions outside their scope of work. She emphasises the importance of dealing with especially negative comments in a timely manner, before they can go viral. Marlow sees it as quite positive to be able to go to Facebook and check if anything has happened on the organisation’s page over the weekend, because for him it is just an easy way to react quickly if someone has a question.

Partly, organisations gain from the more direct way of communicating and mobilising, but they also see their resources strained because more time needs to be allocated to the surveillance of these channels. Adam, for these reasons, has the push function for the organisation’s Twitter account on his private mobile phone. Marilyn, despite the extra demand on her own time, describes the opportunity to use a more direct language when using her own Twitter account to re-tweet something her organisation has published as very positive.

When I am posting something from [the organisation’s] page, I have to use the [the organisation’s] language and values and, you know, opinions. At the same time, if I post it on my account as Marilyn, then I might re-tweet it and maybe add something. I can cite it and I can add something extra – something that is a bit sharper and angrier, or something like that. (Marilyn)

Part of the enabling qualities of social technologies lies in their ability to make work appear as almost non-work, or it might be work but it is not perceived as such. When asked about how posting work-related things during her vacation feels, Melissa answers ‘[n]o, it’s doesn’t bother me, because it’s often things I see on Facebook. I see on Facebook if [organisation] has posted
something, and this I can share because it’s interesting, and so I repost it “read this interesting report.” It just doesn’t really feel like work’. She continues by saying:

I think, when I check Facebook, I feel less like I’m working, even if I do some work-related things. If I just sit and read e-mails, because I have 150 e-mails in the inbox which I have to get through, I experience it as work even if I’m sitting at home and doing it. So Facebook is perceived less than work and nicer and fun, because it is such a mix of things. It might be like I read someone has posted a link to a funny article, and I read that funny article, and that is leisure. But then I post a link to a seminar, an [organisation] seminar, and that is work, but one just does not think about the difference. (Melissa)

Kathryn, told me during our interview that she does not post anything work-related, but 30 minutes later she corrected herself and said ‘I am in a different country every month, more or less, and that I post. I might have thought I am not posting about my job, but I do.’ Eventually, Kathryn also reflected on the things she does with Facebook that are in a way work but maybe not really. She reasoned:

On the contrary, I might not log in and reply to questions or similar when I do not work, but I do things like changing the cover page. I might not see it as work. So there it floats together, there it is no clear boundary between working time and what is not. (Kathryn)

When Holly describes how people discover things on Saturday or Sunday and then share it and colleagues join in, it becomes clear that even these links constitute a grey zone in relation to what constitutes work.

Jill elaborates on the difference between work-related matters and work environment posts:

We might not communicate much about work, but we are quite good at communicating good things about our jobs: “Oh, I have the best colleagues in the world” and “Oh, what a great day today was”. Or on Twitter I got this one last week: “Here you lie sick and Jessica fixes everything for you – and the result is great!” We are quite good at empowering each other and, you know, highlighting the positive things. (Jill)

Rachel combines praise for her co-workers simultaneously with wishing them a good holiday, thus making the difference between work and private life almost indistinguishable. Ebba, on the other hand, describes the advantages of
being able to keep track of people and their new jobs in a market that is quickly changing. She points out that knowledge transfer in this regard becomes easier because people do not just disappear and take everything with them but they remain accessible through social technologies.

Aston, in his description of what he posts and what he is allowed to post, gives a very enlightening example of the tension between the affordance to share and the need to keep things protected. As much as organisations might want to exploit the positive side effects of improved public outreach and the increase of legitimacy, they also need to make sure employees do not share sensitive information. Asked if he ever posts anything about work, Aston explains:

I can, probably when it is difficult or a shocking situation, but with all the restrictions linked to [organisation] it’s very complicated to post something. But still, I will post for instance if there are articles about what we do. If [organisation] has posted articles on the Internet, I will post them on Facebook, so it’s very linked to the work. A lot of the articles are linked to humanitarian needs or humanitarian action. What else? [...] Here in [city of assignment] I went to see the Blue Mosque and the citadel, and I posted pictures of that. And one of the posts, I remember when it was difficult here, I’d say a kind of philosophical sentence about humanity that people who know what is happening in [country of assignment] at this moment, they know why I posted that. (Aston)

5.2.3 Boundary enactment

In the preceding sections I have shown how my participants reason around the idea of work and working for an NGO, what expectations they meet in regard to their availability and in how far social technologies can assist in the coming together of the professional and the private realms. I will use the remainder of the chapter to show how people consciously (re-)enact boundaries through the use of different tactics. Table 5.3 provides examples of how people enact these boundaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual’s mental distinction</td>
<td>‘So, if I Skype with my son and there’s a colleague on Skype and I know I should really clarify one thing with her the next day or the next week, I would never say “Oh come on, now that you are online, tell me, didn’t we want to clarify this and that?”’ Never!’ (Ida)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Quotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual’s use of technological affordances</td>
<td>‘One [list] that is friends and one that is external people, because I don’t want activists to see pictures of me being drunk or of my kids. So I have separated them.’ (Stella)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I kind of like the push function, but I have learnt that since there are so many things that push, I have push with selected mute. I try to mute the things that I don’t need to push, so I like to get everything I am actually interested in through push, but I try to do away with as much noise as possible’ (Jacob)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual’s preconception of norms</td>
<td>‘[It is] unfair to get that question [friend request on Facebook] from one’s boss […], as it could put people in an awkward position where they might not want to say no, where they don’t really manage to do that.’ (Frank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘We might not communicate much about work, but we are quite good at communicating good things about our jobs: “Oh, I have the best colleagues in the world”’. (Jill)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: Different ways of enacting boundaries

Disconnecting from work

Many participants expressed an appreciation for disconnecting from work for their health and to be able to give their best at work. Jill expressed that she needed this break in order to ‘feel well’, while Tanja explained that seeing work-related things by accident immediately triggered stress, i.e. ‘start things off in [her] mind’, as she would then remember all the things she has to do. Heli describes her experiences with boundaries as:

An ongoing battle you have with yourself – you would prefer to not have it like that, but still my job is like that, and if I want it a different way I should have a different job.
When talking about disconnecting from work, two prominent factors emerge. Firstly, many of the employees in this study state that it is relatively easy to disconnect from their daily activities, but they do find it more difficult and sometimes impossible to disconnect from the ideology or the cause of their organisation. Ebba notes that she disconnects from daily activities, sometimes by talking about work to her husband, but she encounters great difficulties letting go of the ideology, as it follows her around and influences everything she does.

Marilyn explains she sees work-related matters on Facebook and Twitter all the time, though she does not necessarily send out anything herself:

Work does not cease to exist, it’s just us who are on vacation. War doesn’t end, starvation doesn’t end, it’s coming all the time. I eventually understood that in order not to accidentally work during my vacation, I must make sure I do not access the Internet.

The constant feed of work-related posts eventually provokes a reaction, and to avoid it Marilyn has to avoid Facebook and Twitter. Stella unfortunately experiences a complete inability to disconnect from work, admitting ‘I wish it was possible.’

Secondly, disconnecting (reducing one’s availability) might be better understood by considering a continuum instead of two distinct states. On the one end of the continuum sit people like Frank and Holly, who can easily disconnect from their work, and in Frank’s case even forget what he was working on the week before.

Tanja says herself that she cannot just switch off and on, but the very clear working times at her organisation help her tremendously. She is very conscious of always using the right technological device and turning off all work devices at 5pm. Closing the computer, turning off the work phone and silencing the iPad have become routines to reinforce the boundaries between work and private life.

Technology can help to disconnect other, completely unrelated, activities. For Molly it is the one hour yoga session every week that allows her to truly let go, while for Marcus it is skiing, for Stella it is bike racing, for Rachel it is painting and for Heli and Melissa it happens when they leave their normal environment and have no access to the usual technologies and news channels. These activities have in common that they simultaneously disconnect the individual from the technology. Abby, Jill and Stella even pointed out that being with their children limits their ability to engage with work in a positive way.

Jacob forgets about work when he reads or does some form of physical activity, but he admits that work theoretically could reach him any time:
When I read. At least when I have the reading flow, and I read books I definitely disconnect from everything, more or less. It is a good way of disconnecting for me. [...] Then it depends… it is not like I go and think about work all the time, but work can reach me, more or less, all the time [laugh]. Of course it can happen. But it is not something I am stressed about or I feel it is an issue – it is not like work hunts me all the time.

Charlie does not mind when work comes up during the weekend in a more relaxed, private context. It is not work in the sense of having to act upon something but more in the form of a fleeting thought, as Marcus confirms: ‘I don’t see it as a problem to think about work in a location different to the office.’ Simultaneously, he points out that finding places to truly turn off is important. He does not feel he really actively seeks distance from work but that he automatically feels a need for distance, because otherwise he could not ‘recharge his batteries for work’.

Arthur emphasises that the distinction between work and private life does not need to be on a practical level but more on a psychological level. Neither his friends nor his partner need to be engaged in the cause, and although he does not object to spending time with colleagues, if they were his only friends, that would be a problem. Arthur highlights potential problems that could arise if work and private life became one, because if ‘the job does not work out but the job is the whole life, then there is nothing to retreat to.’ Tessa prefers a rather strict physical distinction, saying ‘when I am here I am working, and when I am home I am at home. That distinction has always been good for me.’ After having experienced that her personal opinions had become a topic at work, Clara realised the need to protect her personal life through stricter boundaries.

Melissa explains why checking e-mails (or other platforms where work is lurking) during a vacation can be perceived as detrimental to recovery.

It’s a bit like I avoid it, because I know if I check my work mail I am going to be drawn into things, because there are going to be things that I feel “Shit, I need to answer this now or do something.” I feel my stress level is going up just by looking at the misery. So I try to let it be, but often, if I have three weeks’ vacation, I do check my e-mail once or twice anyway, but in the main I let it be.

Kathryn experiences a similar feeling when something work-related appears on Facebook, but she distinguishes between having to do something about it personally or if she can just forward the message to a colleague and ask them to deal with it:
If I start to act on it or interact with it, I am also connecting with work again. It’s obvious that mailing my colleague is also work, but I’m getting rid of work. We still need to deal with it, though, as the situation can get so much worse if nothing happens for one week, two weeks.

As shown in subsection 5.1.2, one major aspect contributing to an environment with more blurred boundaries involves colleagues and superiors. Molly, dissatisfied with her situation of being almost always available, explains ‘If I was a manager, then I wouldn’t start e-mailing people off hours out of principle. I’d put them in my outbox and send them in the morning [...] just to create normalisation, like this is work hours and this is free time.’

Danton clarifies for me how extremely difficult it is to escape work at all in the field. He explains ‘It’s definitely a challenge, one of the biggest challenges we face when we work in this area, humanitarian, field-oriented work, it is. Because it’s difficult. You don’t have a lot of space or lots of opportunities to entertain yourself and to disconnect.’ Nelly states how Skype helps her to escape from her context, albeit for just a little while:

It’s a bit of an escape thing to get out of your context, get out of your reality and jump in for 20 minutes into what they are living and what life in Paris is about or what life in Europe or where they go, what they do and things like that. (Nelly)

Danton barely talks about his work over Skype, except for things such as his colleagues and what the place is like, but not his actual work. Part of the reason is that the work is so different, and therefore difficult to explain to an outsider, but also by avoiding talking about it, he can escape from the actual work.

Temporal boundaries through access restrictions

Restricting access and consequently re-enforcing time boundaries overlap with two of the other three categories involved in enacting boundaries: technological features can be used to restrict access, while partly restricted access through time boundaries can be a very psychological effort.

Putting the phone in a drawer and checking it just once before going to bed, and then not using a computer during a vacation, like Matthew does, is one way of limiting availability enabled through technology. Isabel tries to not use Facebook, Twitter or Skype during her vacation, as she sees them as working tools, but when looking at her flow I conclude that this does not always work out, as she still posts during her vacation and is online. Clara simply turns off her phone at 6pm unless there is a crisis, but when asked about her vacation she confirms that she takes the phone with her and is reachable.
Matthew and Markus turn their phones off and use an app which turns off the radio function of the phone over night, respectively. Marcus started with turning it off overnight but moved to also limiting his availability during the evening. Jill has discovered for herself that leaving her work phone at work is a quite liberating experience psychologically.

Tessa (together with Tanja) probably has the clearest access restriction by turning off the computer, Skype and the e-mail, and then physically leaving the office. She does, however, post quite a lot organisational links on her private profile. These very clear boundaries are undermined by engagement on another platform (Facebook) that does not encourage such clear boundaries.

What is really fascinating is Joshua’s explanation, in that for him it is ‘Quite easy to distinguish what are my work tasks and what is my free time’, because his work is spatially limited to his office. He does, however, answer questions on Facebook. Molly considers her collaborators when she argues:

I don’t e-mail people who don’t e-mail me off hours. So I kind of have that thought, I don’t wanna stress other people, so if I get something from my boss or, like, people who are constantly online, then I answer their e-mails. [In addition] we have a lot of people in regions with time differences and things like that. (Molly)

For her it is not a boundary for herself but for the benefit of other people. The only time boundary she enforces for her own benefit is a one-hour yoga session on Tuesdays. A time boundary enforced for her own benefit is described by Stella:

But sometimes I have to think twice, to make sure I do not post things on Facebook at nine or ten o’clock in the evening, and instead maybe wait until the next day, to show that I am a person with working hours. Because I am of course creating an image of being constantly available, which I am not, but you could choose to be. It is the same thing when I sometimes work at home in the evenings and I write e-mails, but I choose to send them during work hours the next day. So, I do not send an e-mail to an activist or anybody at eleven o’clock at night, since that of course creates an image of being constantly available. (Stella)

Melissa, up until our interview, had successfully resisted owning a smartphone (restricting her own availability), because she was worried that ‘I would work even more and my work would take over my life even more’. When she has really too much to do, Melissa chooses to not open Facebook, as it would draw her in and she would follow interesting links which are most likely work-related but are not necessary for “survival,” so to speak.
Separating platforms

Using different platforms and devices, to avoid blurring and mixing, should be a fairly straightforward affair. Clara uses multiple devices for different activities, because she was dissatisfied with her previous ‘one-device-solution’ and wanted to be able to turn off her work device.

What is used by more people is the separation of accounts, mainly for Skype and Twitter. No one in this sample had two Facebook accounts, but Ida expected to have two Skype accounts, once her employer had fully embraced the technology. Additionally, Siri and Tessa have two Skype accounts, to be able to separate audiences and activities better, and Tanja and Jill administer two Twitter accounts, namely their private and the organisation’s accounts. Jill reasons that administering the organisation’s account as well might also facilitate separation, as it is clear which account is which and access to the official account is easy. As Tanja points out, Twitter makes having two accounts very easy as a result of almost seamless switching between accounts. Adam goes the other way by using his personal account almost exclusively for work purposes.

Jacob gives me his perspective on the difference between e-mails and Facebook and Twitter. For him e-mails in a sense belong to the workplace, and given that people change employers it feels more natural to also switch e-mail addresses. Facebook and Twitter, on the other hand, are dependent on networks, and these are an accumulation of the whole person, not just one of many identities.

Ebba, Clara and Adam are extremely strict in separating their Facebook profiles from work. Ebba and Clara, after having had negative experiences with people from work crossing the boundary and bringing personal things into work (and conversely bringing work into the personal realm), both felt that it was none of their employers’ business what they were doing in their free time. While Clara just unfriended people, Ebba took it one step further and deleted her whole profile, in order to start over with a fake name. Arthur is less strict but still very much focused on using his private profile just for things he can wholeheartedly support.

Molly and Tanja simply reject friend requests from work-related contacts (as opposed to unfriending them later on), and Rachel takes the opposite route and befriends exclusively colleagues. Clara and Ebba have cleaned up their profiles while still working at the same organisation, whereas Sandra intends to tidy up and unfriend work-related contacts once she changes employer.

Frank takes a more nuanced route by being connected with colleagues but re-directing any kind of work or work-related interaction to SMS or e-mail:

It has happened a few times in this messaging function on Face-
book, and then I try to steer it to SMS or e-mail, since I do not want to mix them. On the one hand I think that [...] my co-workers should have this as their free time thing, and that is why I do not want to [...] contribute to making their FB a collaboration tool either. So I definitely do not want mine to be one, and neither do I want to contribute to making theirs one. (Frank)

Using the technology’s features

My participants described four ways of using the technology’s affordances to (re-)enact boundaries and gain some form of control, namely using lists on Facebook, using the synchronisation function inherent to platforms and technologies, actively choosing pull over push and, finally, exploiting the actual interface of a device.

Lists are the most popular means used and described by Stella, Marilyn, Frank, Marlow and Clara. Stella explains that she has ‘one that is friends and one that is external people, because I don’t want activists to see pictures of me being drunk or of my kids. So I have separated them.’ Stella struggled with choosing a particular list or audience when using the mobile Facebook app, so one might argue that her intentions are good but the execution could be poor. She continues by specifying that not all activists are in the external list, because they have become friends over time. This indicates that people are border crossers and might move from one realm into the other over time or suddenly.

Marlow and Frank both choose to have a list with colleagues they can exclude from a post, if need be. Frank elaborates on his reasons:

You are able to differentiate between “friends” and “close friends”, and thus I actually have placed those without any connection to [organisation] in “close friends”. This means that if at some point I think I have an e-mail system which does not work, Lotus Notes, we usually call it Lotus North Korea, so when I need to complain about it loudly, I usually choose the list “close friends” since [...] it is unnecessary if I write something bitter about [the organisation’s] e-mail system to spread it to 60-70 employees and trustees in [organisation] I think. (Frank)

Clara, on the other hand, is more inclusive in her exclusion and does not restrict her restricted list to just colleagues (possibly because she chooses to unfriend most of her colleagues and just keep a select few). Marilyn, after having discovering that she could no longer use her personal profiles during vacations, as they brought in too much work, decided to create lists to be able
to look exclusively at her friends’ posts whilst on holiday. For her it is a way of taking back her profile.

Rachel mentions that she turns off the synchronisation function on her smartphone for the calendar and the e-mail during vacations, but not over the weekend. Jill elected to delete the apps for Facebook and Twitter on her phone so that she would not ‘randomly check in on what has happened’. Instead, it becomes an effort to enter the web address and log in. Having experimented with this strategy for five months now, I can confirm that my use went down drastically, as I lack the patience to re-enter log in details and wait for the impossibly long loading of the page. The laborious nature of the task is quite a solid help in defending at least some boundaries.

Adam and, to a certain degree, Jacob described how they use the options “push” and “pull” on certain platforms to limit accidental exposure to too much noise (in Jacob’s case) and to work (in Adam’s case). Adam has his work e-mail on his private phone but he chooses pull instead of push, ‘to not feel under pressure to check the work e-mail outside office hours.’ Frank turns off the work’s e-mail “ping” on his phone.

Frank has actually found one of the more inventive ways to address the problem of work e-mails on his smartphone by placing the short-cut to the app on the last page of the flipping overview on his iPhone. This overview places all apps on the phone in a neat order on the screen, and the user can move around apps and decide on the order (e.g. all social media apps on one page or most frequently used apps on one page). By placing it on the last page, together with apps he never uses, he avoids knowing when e-mails have arrived and does not feel the need to answer.

Mental distinction

One could argue that almost all of the tactics described by my participants involve a premeditated decision do separate the two areas. This part, nevertheless, exemplifies the thinking process involved in making boundaries happen. Charlie points to usage-discipline to enjoy an increased benefit instead of increased stress from these technologies. Clara echoes this sentiment by saying that we all need to learn how to best use technologies, but it is by no means clear how much is enough.

Kathryn puts the finger, albeit accidentally, on the fundamental problem with boundaries. Are they physical or mental? According to Kathryn they are probably more latter than the former:

So I have probably taught myself, it is not a boundary but instead more of, I can do that, I can see that I have e-mails on a Saturday, and then I go out running and I, you know, do not care. I will read
them on Tuesday or on Monday, if it is a normal week. But this is not like a boundary. (Kathryn)

For Melissa, though, boundaries can be created through routines. When she describes her day for me she tells me that she calls her mother before work and when her working day is over. These two instances create a starting point and an end point.

Stella’s way of using Facebook has created very permeable boundaries, but she nevertheless tries to enforce some kind of order and boundary. She explains that when is asked something work-related on Facebook, she at least sometimes manages to not answer and instead answers ‘from my work e-mail, when I work.’ A lot stricter in relation to these time boundaries is Adam, who says ‘this is about me having chosen to have normal work hours and everything outside I have to take when I have office hours.’

From Frank, Kathryn and Joshua’s stories I gather that there is also one mental boundary that seems to concern what kind of work is allowed on social technologies and which parts are not. Joshua explains that it is okay to use Facebook for answering questions and helping his organisation, but spreading what his organisation does is going too far. For him there are other, more interesting questions and issues to spread. Similarly, Kathryn and Frank gladly share if they do something fun at work, but they do not want to use their personal profiles to market their organisations. Even though Matthew is usually an eager ambassador for his organisation, he sometimes refuses to spread information if he ‘does not feel like it’ or is lacking time.

Ida offers a perfect example of how an individual’s decisions are related to the question of how social technologies blur boundaries. When talking about Skype and contacting people after hours, she mentions her colleague in another country often being online in the evening:

I’d do that, rarely. And certainly not work-related questions that I separate. So if I Skype with my son and there’s a colleague on Skype and I know I should really clarify one thing with her the next day or the next week, I would never say “Oh come on, now that you are online, tell me, didn’t we want to clarify this and that?” Never! (Ida)

Kathryn emphasises that even when she sees a message outside office hours and it would be really quick to answer, she does not do it because that would communicate to others that she is available and she would feel she would have to answer other messages as well. This strategy, unfortunately, is only available for e-mail, as one cannot set an out-of-office message on Facebook and the sender of the message can see if the receiver of the message has
5.2.4 Censorship

All individuals censor themselves all of the time (some call it good behaviour) but especially on social technologies, due to the almost eternal quality of the medium. Once something is out on the Internet, there is no taking it back and it easily turns into a disproportionate issue – as the Twitter scandal of Justine Sacco vividly illustrates (Ronson, 2015). My participants described censorship to me in two regards, in that they censor themselves not only for their own benefit, but also for their organisation’s benefit.

Benefit to the individual

The basis of any kind of online connection and interaction is trust. Isabel explains:

> Somehow, trust involves working between friends you share your private life with, and they do not post things. And I am not afraid of anything like that, that things become too private, because these things are not exposed very much on Facebook at all. It could possibly be a picture every now and then. (Isabel)

If that trust, however, is missing or underdeveloped, or people are just confused by the sheer variety of audiences, some people revert to not posting anything at all. Molly states:

> I might post a few pictures of my kids, but I am very restrictive with what I write, because I know it’s such a wide spectrum of people on there. It’s just a blur to me, so I am very careful with what I post.

This is taken one step further by Jill, who argues that ‘first and foremost one wants a person’s profile to keep together, and that the one you meet is even
the one you see online and that there is no discrepancy between them – what is real and what is on the ‘net.’

Tanja is the only participant who in the past was on the receiving end of online hate. As a consequence of this experience she had to move and she changed her online behaviour radically, preventing her from posting anything that could even remotely be offensive for some bored cyberspace “troll”. She has limited her freedom to such a degree that one has to question when lawmakers will finally catch up with reality and treat online harassment and hate as they would be treated in the physical world.

Benefit to the organisation

When considering the benefit of censorship for organisations it becomes clear that they win additional exposure without the associated costs, both in terms of work time and reputation damage. Marcus explains:

Well, it’s just what kind of images you are using, what kind of pictures you are uploading, what comments you make on pictures and so forth. That has to be within what is politically correct for a private person in [organisation] to say. I mean, there are a lot of thought processes behind even making a quick comment. (Marcus)

Clara confirms the necessity of this thought process, because things posted on Twitter for example easily develop their own dynamic, and one needs to have thought beforehand about the acceptability of a post as an employee of a certain organisation. Many of the employees have their organisation in their about section and therefore think twice about what to write, as Melissa clarifies. Marilyn describes her thought process in terms of an internal filter:

You could say that I have an internal filter. I believe that it is necessary, since I represent a political organisation which has a lot of opinions that I, you know, just could not [...] This is mostly on Twitter. I would, if I worked somewhere else or definitely not here, I would be able to be much more like I am in real life, because I limit myself a lot to not saying the wrong things which could potentially harm my organisation. (Marilyn)

People in this study are especially careful in regard to political opinions or links to articles that have a clear political message, as they often have connections with different sides of the political spectrum and they do not want to antagonise anyone. Heli, Holly and Melissa post personal, not too personal though, and work-related things, but everything is party-neutral. Holly emphasises that she
would not post anything that would undermine her reputation as a dedicated professional, while Marlow describes his struggles with not being sure about what is acceptable to post and what is not, and that under no circumstances would he want to harm his organisation with something ‘dumb’ he might have written.

The so-called “golden rule” of “you can write what you can say in the lunch room” is severely criticised by Jill, who felt that she could absolutely stand for everything and say it in the lunch room but it would still be inappropriate for social technologies, because the audiences and the reach by far exceed the canteen.

One way of addressing the issue of what is appropriate, and to create some kind of organisational coherence in online posting and sharing activities, is described by Holly. In her work group a lot of the people are connected on Facebook and they have developed a form of social filter, to determine the appropriateness of certain posts:

And we talk quite a lot about this in the work team. Sometimes you might find that someone else has written something and you react like “Holy moly, what were you thinking? That was not good.” Then we tell each other, you know, this might not have been that smart. Or sometimes you might say that this was not proper, since other organisations will see it and react, and could you therefore remove it, please? And usually people do that. (Holly)

Holly explains that there is ‘no written policy, there are no rules for what one can do and cannot do, and so one is expected to use one’s own judgement. But this judgement is formed by common discussions in our section.’

5.3 Tentative findings about expectations and boundaries

In this chapter it has been clarified that people have to deal with different expectations coming from the external environment, not only in relation to their organisation, but also their own expectations about work and the limits thereof. External expectations can be expressed by partners demanding not just physical but also psychological presence or by peers in similar roles in other organisations that choose more integrated ways to work and therefore change the rules of the game. Organisations express certain expectations in terms of what people can share on social technologies (“common sense”), but they also stipulate that people should share information for the benefit of the organisation. Finally, the individual expects to be able to have a life outside of work while
at the same time keeping some form of autonomy to decide how much to work out of hours.

The purpose of boundaries and their enactment is to create distance between private life and work life. Without any boundaries there would be no control over intrusions into either of these spheres. The private sphere is important to be able to disconnect and to recover from work (similarly, work can be a retreat from one’s personal life).

Ubiquitous social technologies challenge traditional boundaries through their push features, but individuals also choose to pull work-related things into their personal and digital spheres. Simultaneously, these perceived affordances allow individuals to manage their boundaries in more of a fine-grained, potentially more sophisticated, way.
6. Online observations – posting with passion

This chapter is the third of three chapters in which I present my empirical material. In this chapter I explain what I have observed on Facebook, how Twitter fits into the picture and what value LinkedIn offers in regard to understanding boundaries. The chapter starts with a presentation of the pattern of work “appearances” on Facebook, consisting of employer-sanctioned, employee-instigated and organisational culture posts.

During the netnography I observed three different kinds of work posts on Facebook. These expressions of blurred boundaries, found within social technologies, can be categorised by their degree of work relation, ranging from directly caused by work to voluntarily sharing experiences of an organisation’s culture. Additionally, they can be pulled into one’s life or be pushed by others. On Twitter there are three different types of post: personal posts, work-unrelated but impersonal posts and work-related posts that are either sanctioned by the employer or instigated by the employee. Of these work-related posts, the majority are employee-instigated, which is not so surprising since Twitter is where the conversation happens, where another kind of outreach is possible.

Through my participants’ stories it becomes clear that technology enables changes to how we work, how we make sense of what work is and also that interaction between humans and technology is a learning process. Technology, the individual and the environment do not exist independently of each other; rather, humans appropriate technology, and the environment is shaped by but also shapes interactions between humans, as well as between humans and technologies:

Especially when you work with social media, the beginning and the end of work are so hard to really find, because you answer [the organisation’s] tweets during the evening or nights, or whatever. We have an official Twitter account for the whole organisation as well, but sometimes you want to do it as the person behind it, and of course that is the same account that I use for private reasons. So for me it is pretty much integrated into my life. (Jacob)
Jacob voluntarily chooses to use his own account, because, according to him, this is sometimes what is needed. Of course, though, he does not live in a vacuum, so the expectations of the people with whom he interacts are shaped by his behaviour. For the organisation this could be highly beneficial, as its message enjoys a broader reach, but there is also the risk that the individual in question might post things that could be used against the organisation. One consequence of the bridging of different areas of life with the help of social technologies is the increasing exposure of the individual. If one chooses to use Twitter, for example, or to mix different audiences on Facebook, everything written or posted is also judged in the context of the organisation, as Clara points out:

> It turned out to have its own dynamic, ’cause it isn’t your private affairs any more – what you write on Twitter. I have to think if what I write now fits with the values of [my organisation], ’cause people don’t distinguish “this is Clara” privately and “this is Clara on behalf of [her organisation]”.

As mentioned before, human beings do not passively accept what technologies and the environment “offer”; rather, they appropriate. The circumstances sometimes also force people to reinforce boundaries when, for example, matters from the digital realm are placed into the analogue world. One way of doing this is to separate audiences (at least partly), as Clara describes it after having found her limits:

> I’ve deleted all of them [colleagues from my Facebook], ’cause political opinions of mine became the topic of internal discussions. That is absolutely borderline, and it’s none of my employer’s business what I do on Facebook.

Another option is to use different platforms and/or selectively devices, as Isabel points out when she describes that ‘[w]hen I am really free I don’t check Facebook, because for me it is a working tool in a way – and no Twitter or Skype either.’ Those two strategies are not necessarily meant to keep work out away from a certain platform completely, since work-related instances might not come with a push or as employer-sanctioned but they might come in the form of employee-instigated or organisational culture posts.

Employer-sanctioned posts have a very clear connection to the organisation for which the individual works, and often they catch the individual’s attention through polite suggestions at work to spread a particular link/information or by seeing the link on the organisation’s Facebook/Twitter page and then sharing/re-tweeting it accordingly. Employee-instigated posts have a greater variety and include links that are related to the organisation’s cause but do not
come from the organisation, posts in which the individual is tagged by colleagues or posts that are related to the individual’s work activities but which do not necessarily emphasise the organisation’s cause. Finally, organisational culture posts are organisation-unspecific, in that they could be posted more or less by anyone and they concern the working environment at large. You do not need to work for an NGO to experience dysfunctional technology or chocolate in the office kitchen.

Looking at the online observations, and including explanations from the interviews about organisational practices and expectations, it becomes evident that not all work-related instances on social platforms have the same quality. As established above, some are employer-sanctioned, some are employee-instigated and some are concerned with the organisational culture at work. Correspondingly, some of those instances are pushed into individuals’ online presence and some are pulled.¹

Organisational push can be very clear, as in a social media policy that says “spread the message”, less obviously communicated in meetings or emails and even more subtly by having colleagues who spread everything all the time creating indirect peer pressure. Pushing relates to what the individual experiences, perceives as expectations and direct links, posts, etc. in their work context. In relation to work posts, this push can be triggered partly by the ideology underlying the organisation (ideology does not necessarily refer to a political stand here). All NGOs in this study are ideas-driven, but some have a stronger ideological stand than others that supports their work.

The individual could theoretically pull anything into their timeline – personal, political or work-related posts. Furthermore, on a platform like Facebook, which has a relatively clear focus on the person, the pull for personal posts could be either very strong or relatively weak; if an individual is very extroverted the pull will be greater, but for an introverted person the pull will be smaller. Even though the platform itself focuses on personal aspects, work-related matters could be pulled by the individual to varying degrees.

It needs to be clarified that none of those categories represents an evaluation of any post or incident as being naturally positive or negative for the employee (or for the employer, for that matter). It is likely that the participants in this study see each of these posts as either positive or neutral (in the sense of not disturbing) and fulfilling a function; otherwise, they probably would not have shared them, allowed the tagged post on their timeline or posted them in the first place. It cannot be emphasised enough that the majority of those posts fulfil a function for the individual, and technology does not impose anything on the individual. What I observed is the result of an ongoing negotiation

¹The term “push” is chosen as a reference to smartphone applications’ typical distinctions between information “push” and “pull”.

169
between people, and between people and technology.

In Table 6.1, an overview is provided of the number of observations and the people I observed. Due to the nature of the observations, all identifying information is omitted and the posts have been translated. If the original post was in English, it has been paraphrased and not been used as direct quote.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Total no. FB Obs.</th>
<th>Employer-sanctioned</th>
<th>Employee-instigated</th>
<th>Org. culture</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isabel</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matteo</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clara</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlow</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heli</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanja</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM</td>
<td>2192</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: Summary of online observations

6.1 Employer-sanctioned

The first form of work crossing the boundary to the more personal realm of Facebook happens when an organisation asks its employees to spread a link or an action, or to use their own connections to mobilise a message. I call this an
“employer-sanctioned appearance,” and I coded 658 of the 2,235 observational instances in this category. These occurrences would usually happen during work time, but they nonetheless constitute a boundary transgression, as people are asked to use their personal profiles on these platforms. Just one of the participants created her profile at the behest of her organisation, but it does not change the fact that it is a personal profile, i.e. her name and her social network.

Some employees use specific “work-profiles” that usually include somewhere in the name section the organisation, but none of my participants chose that option (though they did mention it to me as something colleagues did on occasion). Given Facebook’s radical disabling attack on all profiles that do not use their legal names (see Tugend, 2014), it remains to be seen how the platform will react to these types of profile.

Figure 6.1 provides a good example of an employer-sanctioned post. Both involved organisations gain publicity and positive recognition through the individual’s post. This is an example for illustration purposes taken from one of my colleagues, with his consent. This is not part of my empirical material.

Employer-sanctioned posts demonstrate a great amount of organisational push and relatively little individual pull. To clarify this point, the push can come in various forms and should not be understood completely literally, in that there is no boss standing behind the employee ordering her to post this and publish that. More often it will be kind suggestions in meetings, colleagues setting an example and the connection of commitment to the cause to following the organisation on social media. This is why I argue that there is a certain degree of individual pull, even though it is limited – after all, the individual has to do it in order to allow it to happen.

Surprisingly, I frequently found participants advertising their employers’ job positions. Sometimes they just shared the link, but often they added an encouraging or humorous text – as in the case of Isabel, who wrote “[s]o this is one of those so-called “jobs” all adolescents want’ (FB, Isabel, 2013/05/27, link to job ad), indirectly referring to the political debate in her country of residence at that point in time. There is of course a personal incentive for spreading at least certain job ads, as the organisation is recruiting her future colleagues and it probably does not hurt to try to find people to work with that she already knows. Occasionally, these job ads are upgraded with a very entertaining/encouraging text:

I am looking for a partner in crime :) We will work in a tight team “attached by the hip,” which means you must keep up, be driven, totally focused on saving the world, be able to take clear upfront communication, don’t be a wimp or whine – I’m not going to be sweet with you :) (FB, Isabel, 2012/01/20, link to job ad)
Figure 6.1: Employer-sanctioned post in an academic context
Apply for one of the most stimulating and challenging jobs I have ever had. The reward for students and parents is fantastic, and you get to go to work every day and be part of making the world a better place. (FB, Kathryn, 2013/09/20, link to job ad)

One of the difficulties with this category of posts is that a lot of them are so specific that they cannot be anonymised without losing all meaning. I nevertheless tried to find suitable examples that convey at least part of the category-specific attributes. Marlow once spread a link to an activity his organisation undertook to collect donations, with the comment ‘Fund-raising trip with wind in the sails’ (FB, Marlow, 2014/08/16, link to organisation’s blog). Likewise, following a very publicity-intensive action by her organisation, in which she participated, Isabel linked to a video on YouTube thanking everyone for their support:

Thanks for all support, all encouraging words, it means unbelievably much <3 [transforms into a heart on FB]. Together we make a safe, sustainable energy system possible! (FB, Isabel, 2012/10/12)

I coded this as being directly related, even though the link does not go to her organisation’s website (which is a condition for this category), because the video came from her organisation (YouTube is the one place all videos are hosted) and this action was planned and executed by her organisation – it can hardly be any more “work”-like than this. Isabel received from her network on Facebook enormous amounts of support for this action. People encouraged her and sent their love, hearts and support. Extremely few people were critical publicly on Isabel’s wall whereas outside of Facebook her organisation received quite some critique for this action. This example shows that bringing work into Facebook can also be beneficial for the individual as it becomes a place for additional support.

Frank is the only one who posts in the third person singular, as was probably intended when designing the Facebook status update interface, and he has overall a very humorous approach to work, which admittedly made me laugh more than once. When he posted a link to a video in which he explains an aspect related to his area of responsibility, he writes ‘FRANK is now just sitting and waiting on becoming bigger than Gangnam Style.’ (FB, Frank, 2013/03/04, link to video) Working for the same organisation, Heli has used her Facebook to spread her organisation’s links extensively and she always – really always – uses very positive language, even when she just randomly spreads a link, as in this example: ‘We are doing so extremely many great things at [organisation]! :)' (FB, Heli, 2012/10/30, link to organisation-s ac-
tivity). Alternatively, she directs attention to a certain event, as in the following example:

Pepping and preparing this year’s Almedalen week. No matter how much there is to do before, you always manage somehow :). Please come to [organisation’s] activities if you are there, or follow us live on [organisation].se (FB, Heli, 2012/06/21, link to organisation’s presentation).

Concerning the same event but one year later, Melissa writes, even though she was quite literally waiting for her baby to come any day:

I really would have liked to have been at the annual meeting in [city], but I am sitting at home and waiting for the baby instead, and that is also quite cosy :) A big hug to all my lovely [organisational] friends who are there. (FB, Melissa, 2013/05/04, link to organisation’s website)

The transition from working full time to being on parental leave is rather gradual when it comes to work-related posts. None of the participants that had a child during the observational period stopped from one day to the next – it usually took a couple of weeks –, and when changing jobs a similar pattern occurred.

This could be observed even on LinkedIn, as the profiles are personal and not organisational. However, the difference is that it is a fundamentally work-related platform. Theoretically, employees could object if they do not like the specific thing/call for action they are supposed to share, but this seems rather unlikely given the high-commitment organisations with which they are involved. On LinkedIn it simply adds to their work identity, while on Facebook and Twitter (unless they have a clear distinction on Twitter) it competes with their personal identity. Overall, these posts have an explicit link to the organisation, and the employee may or may not relate on a personal level in their comment to an event or body of information.

On Twitter the majority of (work) posts are either directly or indirectly linked to the individual’s employer, and with very few exceptions there are basically no organisational culture posts. What seems to be easier on Twitter is the switch between a personal, political and professional identity, possibly because the large amount of tweets allows for greater variety. Twitter is made for high-frequency communication, whereas Facebook invites slightly deeper engagement with a single post by and to a limited audience. The structure of Twitter, which lets older posts disappear in the ocean of new posts, also gives a greater freedom to change the main focus of posts over time. The individual can post frequently for their organisation, but after changing employer these
posts disappear into the depths of Twitter more or less the next day. Changing alliances is easy and more or less friction-free. Just change the two rows in the “about” section and tomorrow no one remembers what you did last week. On Facebook that option to change alliances has become a lot harder since the introduction of the timeline scroll and search function. Facebook invites the viewer to enjoy the full experience, whereas Twitter offers a fleeting experience of the other person.

On Facebook, Matteo writes ‘[j]ust another day at the office... :)' when he links to another quite spectacular action his organisation planned and executed. It is a simple and cheap way to give the organisation more reach and to point out subtly the exciting stuff his employer does. Being proud of one’s employer probably does not hurt employee satisfaction and loyalty. Melissa explained during our interview that she uses Facebook quite consciously for work purposes, and one of the conclusions she has drawn from observing others with similar jobs is that there needs to be a mix of work-related and personal posts on Facebook, a notion which stands in contrast to Twitter, where people often follow random strangers due to shared interests, not because they are acquainted:

Now I’m going home to pack. Tomorrow NY. I will be blogging about the [organisation’s cause-related] negotiations in the blog below. Here on Facebook it will be mixed between [organisation’s cause] and cupcakes. (FB, Melissa, 2012/07/19, link to blog)

She prepared the audience for what was coming while simultaneously drawing attention to the important part, namely blogging about the negotiations. Melissa is good at wrapping up the important part of a message with something funny or engaging, when she takes the time. She also rarely leaves out an opportunity to spread information on behalf of her organisation:

Today we are launching our new school site with exciting and important material about [the issue for which her organisation fights] for high schools. Please spread it to teachers you know, your children’s teachers and of course don’t forget to check it out yourself! (FB, Melissa, 2012/09/19, link to website)

During maternity leave the stream of work-related posts declined and was taken over by personal posts, but this was taken up full-throttle again the day she went back to the office. During her leave the occasional employer sanctioned post slipped through, as also happened for Jacob, for example, but not surprisingly there were no organisational culture posts.

On Twitter, some of my participants’ (for example Isabel and Marcus) profiles were virtually fully work-related, even though the accounts were were
in their names and the handles did not indicate any organisation. Employer-sanctioned and employee-instigated posts were observed on those profiles, but there was nothing personal. The advantage of this strategy is that the individual can use the same Twitter account with the build up network, even in a potential new job, whereas a Twitter handle indicating the organisation would be lost in a job change. A unique advantage an organisation gains from its employees engaging in conversations about the cause on Twitter is the wider spread of and public accessibility to these discussions.

6.2 Employee-instigated

A second form of boundary crossing involves employee-instigated occurrences. Of the overall number of observations this is the biggest group with 957 examples. Figure 6.2 gives a typical example for an employee-instigated post taken from my own wall. A colleague of mine tagged me in a picture taken at a seminar at work.

This category includes instances when, for example, people are tagged in a work context or employees use their networks to find a person with specific skills for their organisation. This does not necessarily happen for recruiting purposes but is more likely to be the result of looking for project-based contributions. Isabel, for example, was looking for an illustrator: ‘[p]rofessional illustrator is needed instantly! – need a certain picture till tomorrow. It is about painting a picture similar to the background here (but not animated)’ (FB, Isabel, 2012/12/12, link to example).

At a later point in time she was contacted on her Facebook wall by a collaborator: ‘[name], who worked with the illustration, is looking for you to get some info about fast corrections. Or if anybody else from [organisation] who knows about the issue would be able to contact him’ (FB, message on Isabel’s wall, 2012/12/12). Those occurrences are admittedly rare but not unheard of, and they do not seem to be limited to just a certain kind of organisation, as Sandra had similar wall posts and Jacob was publicly shamed by a colleague for being late to a meeting: ‘Wonder where big brother Jacob is when we have a meeting... Therefore I’m using fb to diss him in public. What will the revenge be you think?’ (FB, Jacob tagged, 2012/03/06)

The category of employee-instigated incidents includes activities such as employees forming groups on these social networks to foster their work involvement or enable exchanges with peers in similar positions in other NGOs. All of these activities are not necessarily sanctioned by their organisation, but they are nevertheless indirectly related to work. Without exception all employees I observed “liked” their organisation’s Facebook page(s) – sometimes there were different ones for different branches of the organisation, and many
Figure 6.2: Employee-instigated post in an academic context
even were members of groups somehow related to their work, for instance a group for employees of NGOs or a group aimed at fostering professional development. The common denominator in these groups and pages is that they were related to the work part of life and not to the personal aspect. To put it differently, these were not pages replete with kittens or flying unicorns.

Sometimes employees blatantly try to increase their organisation’s reach by encouraging others to “like” it on social media: ‘[w]e are good as an organisation on social media! If you have not yet “liked” [organisation] on Facebook, please do so!’ (FB, Heli, 2012/08/22). This often goes together with individuals being thoroughly committed and very positive about their organisation, for example when Isabel exclaims ‘I have the best job in the world :)’ (FB, Isabel, 2012/10/10, change of profile picture) when changing her profile picture, showing her in a work-related context. Facebook is also used to express joy with one’s work when something great has happened, as seen in the way Isabel quotes one of her colleagues: ‘best day to work since 19th of September’ (FB, Isabel, 2013/11/19), or when Arthur uses Facebook feelings to express excitement on his first day at a new job (FB, Arthur, 2013/12/17).

Often employees would spread ideas or links connected to their work and not directly provided by their employer. A useful side-effect for the organisation is that its employees create a form of urgency enabled by all different kinds of news, links and facts. They gather relevant information from a variety of outlets and bring them together on their personal profile, something an organisational Facebook presence could not do. This in turn helps to emphasise the main message of the organisation, and consequently it assists the cause:

The best and most stringent article I have read in a while. Numbers and facts instead of unfounded opinions. And in addition from a scientist – wonderful [name of author]. (FB, Isabel, 2012/05/11, link to article)

I found numerous examples in this respect, but they are reasonably difficult to anonymise, as they are extremely focused on the cause of the organisation, and so in order to clarify the greater value of these posts I will create a fictitious example. If my employer’s goal was to save unicorns I would always encounter people who do not see the point and who would think my organisation was being run by a bunch of crazy communists. If I as an individual use articles and statistics published by the BBC and research about the value of living unicorns done by Columbia University, to support the position of my organisation, I create a broader basis for my organisation’s initial argument, which in turn helps my organisation to convince critics, gain members and acquire donations.

The same applies if my organisation’s declared goal is to increase the number of vacation days for shift workers. Each and every individual spreading the
message and supporting it with articles and research from independent sources helps to make the broader public understand why 45 vacation days for shift workers are appropriate and important (and not just the unreasonable demands of a small minority). Employer-sanctioned posts help to spread the word about the organisation, but these employee-instigated posts give the message more support:

I am often (but not always) too much of a coward and a bit too reluctant to enter into a time-consuming discussion where most of my friends get upset and angry with me. However, [author of article] is never a coward. (FB, Melissa, 2014/01/31, link to her organisation’s position on a particular issue)

In this example Melissa uses an article written by someone else to defend her organisation in regard to a controversial issue to which a lot of people took offence. Frank uses Facebook to express certain dissatisfaction with the information distribution capabilities of his organisation. This is not sanctioned by his employer but is clearly connected to his work and the cause of his organisation:

FRANK has written fantastically many good pension and insurance texts for [organisation’s] website over the years. Just a shame that a needy public finds them as often as a human walks on the moon. (FB, Frank, 2013/05/20)

In this category we also find posts in which my participants’ colleagues have tagged them in a work-related context. This would include tagging not only in posts about explicitly work-related activities or events such as meetings, actions or conferences, but also in Christmas party posts, as in for example ‘[a]nother zombie appears – with Isabel in [part of city]’ (FB, Isabel tagged, 2013/12/14). Even though a post about the Christmas party itself belongs to the organisational culture category, the fact that they did not choose to put it up themselves but it was “pushed” into their profile classifies it as being within the “employee-instigated” category.

Employee-instigated posts can be described by a potentially high degree of organisational push and a potentially high degree of individual pull. Neither push nor pull needs to be extremely high, but both are reasonably strong. Both the organisation and the individual stand to gain from this kind of post. For the individual it is a reassurance of their work identity, their professional network and their organisational belonging, whilst for the organisation it offers positive reputation building and additional support for spreading the message (especially when individuals spread links connected to the goal of their organisation).
One of the examples taken up in the employer-sanctioned category showed Isabel’s reaction to public support she received on Facebook. In the following we see one of those public messages:

Awesome work Isabel! Insanely proud of your actions, you have my full support! (FB, message on Isabel’s wall, 2012/10/13)

Tagging of colleagues happens surprisingly often, and since people have to agree to it appearing on their wall it can be assumed that they either do not mind it or see it positively. Not surprisingly, I did not find a single instance of a post with a negative message but quite a variety regarding the content of big events, such as starting or ending work somewhere, to coming back after vacation (in all cases, the participant is tagged by a colleague):

New [organisation], new mini palm trees, new cookie culture, a totally new gang ready for creating important debates, kick the people in power and contribute to more cooperation for a peaceful world. Address: [street] in [city] – (with Arthur and 3 others.) (FB, Arthur tagged in a photo by a colleague, 2012/01/17)

How the heck shall I be able to start working again without an after lunch nap? Maybe we should introduce siesta in the office... What do you think X, X, X, Isabel, X, X,X, X, X,+ all others? (FB, Isabel tagged, 2013/08/09)

Tagging colleagues is often triggered by unusual events like a big success of the organisation, a birthday, a new job or leaving an old job. The trigger can be both organisational and personal:

I have the best colleagues and work team in the world!! Thank you for flowers and chocolate – you are the best!! - with Marlow and 3 others (FB, Marlow tagged by a colleague, 2012/05/27)

In the employee-instigated category I observed a certain amount of posts clearly intended to increase the visibility of one’s network with the help of work-related posts. Some of those posts are used to praise others for their work while simultaneously showing the connection for everyone visible. It is unclear if this is an intended outcome or just a useful side-effect, but it nevertheless helps to strengthen ties. Two of the best examples are as follows:

Long before I started working for [organisation] there were two people who, for me, stood out as symbols for the organisation – [name] and Melissa. These two brilliant people I both saw from a distance and met in several different contexts. [Name] I later
had as a manager, and now that he has taken on new challenges at [other organisation] one can afford to say that he was the most straightforward and clear manager I ever had – abilities I appreciate very much. Melissa I still have as a colleague (and friend), which I am extremely happy about. There is really no other person I rather would put the lobbying of [organisation] in the hands of. Sharpness, pragmatism and a contagious feeling that it is possible to influence are for me Melissa’s hallmarks. (FB, Jacob, 2013/02/26)

My colleagues are as good as it gets. First we have [colleague 1]. She is smart, competent and a real judge of character. Additionally, she is one of the bravest people I know. Then we have [colleague 2], who is goal-oriented, strong and an expert on layouting. [Colleague 2] is additionally just as awesome at board games. Both [colleague 1] and [colleague 2] surprise in good and bad times with good cake. Last but not least we have [colleague 3], who is helpful as well, full of ideas and whose humour is in a class of its own. The last time I turned even [colleague 3] made by far tastiest smorgascake I have ever eaten. It is great to have the honour of working together with three great people! (FB, Sandra, 2014/01/29)

For some posts the line between employee-instigated and organisational culture can be thin. The participants write, for example, quite voluntarily about some parts of their working life, such as meetings. The distinction I suggest is between writing about fairly unrelated factors, like a late lunch or the colour of a tie worn for an occasion (organisational culture), and the straightforward mentioning of whom the meeting was with and that the outcome was rather disappointing. Somehow in the post there is a clear connection to the employer and the employee’s work, for example when Isabel writes how ‘[w]onderful [it is] when on a Monday morning one finds a mail from a [strong opponent of her organisation] in the inbox!’ (FB, Isabel, 2012/12/10.) A probably slightly more entertaining instance is described by Stella:

My intern is calling the Police: Hi, I am calling for [organisation] and I have some questions regarding permits from the police. Police: “Is it about a weapon permit?” (FB, Stella, 2014/03/22)

Stella writes about a funny and random occurrence at work that gains a comical dimension when considering that fighting against guns is one of the declared goals of her organisation. This is not on the same level as ‘there is chocolate
in the kitchen at work’, though, as it does not relate to the work environment but instead to a core issue of her organisation. Having said that, not everything belonging in the first and second categories has to be sad or serious. Part of the success of Facebook posts is the inclusion of a humoristic dimension, as Frank shows in an exemplary manner:

FRANK first thinks it is good that we passed the Twelfth Day, so I don’t have to take out the white funeral tie for today’s negotiation, but then decide that it would have fitted as a comment on the level of energy and initiative of the [negotiating organisation]. (FB, Frank, 2012/01/11, picture of tie)

Despite his disappointment regarding his irritation with the other negotiating party, he manages to add a glimmer of humour to the situation. Even though ties and lunch choices would be part of organisational culture, this particular example is not so, because it relates very clearly to Frank’s work tasks. Heli shows a similar attitude when her disappointment after an important negotiation is obvious, but she emphasises that this is part of working for ideas-driven organisations:

This was T-day. T as in new [focus group] agreement. High ambitions and expectations lead to results, but also legitimate disappointment. Such, we are of course. We always want more. We who work or devote our spare time to engagement-driven organisations/non-profit organisations. Tomorrow the discussion continues with thousands of engaged people, disappointed, happy, angry, curious... (FB, Heli, 2012/09/26)

And sometimes, employees simply express their confusion with certain demands or policies issued by their employer. This particular one is on the border between employee-instigated and organisational culture, as part of the statement, far too many emails after his vacation, is clearly linked to his work(load), while the other part about his employer’s demands would naturally be more of a description of the work environment:

FRANK is back at work, to 333 unread e-mails and a demand from the HR unit to update “for my own safety” as soon as possible my information in the emergency contact list. It would be interesting to know in which way my existence becomes safer if [organisation] knows who my closest relative is, preferably before I start dealing with the pile of e-mails. (FB, Frank, 2012/08/06)
6.3 Organisational culture

In the third category I summarise all kinds of activities, posts and messages concerning organisational culture in the workplace. Of the total 2,374 observations for this study, 621 examples belong in the present category. The example in Figure 6.3 provides recognisable insights into academic culture with long-winding, never-ending discussions. As clarified before, this is just an illustration – this picture is not part of my empirical material. All individuals whose Facebook posts are used as illustrations consented to appearing in my dissertation.

People spend such a huge part of their lives at work that it is not surprising that the social aspects thereof provoke engagement either after work or
in another realm. The participants in this study quite regularly wrote about funny, motivating or enlightening instances at work, for example when Frank was ‘feeling how the Christmas spirit and harmony is spreading over the workplace’ (FB, Frank, 2012/12/12) or when he noted ‘the highlight so far today: a colleague talks about their time in jail during lunch.’ (FB, Frank, 2013/06/28). It is equally entertaining when Frank:

Is lacking personal experience of apres-ski, which is the theme for this year’s staff party, but the second-hand information I received over the years sets my expectations for sweaty people in underwear, mediocre cover bands which play slightly old-fashioned, sing-along music, huge amounts of liquor in forms you normally would hesitate to employ for internal use, and, at night, sexual intercourse between colleagues in unexpected constellations. (FB, Frank, 2013/02/05)

It could also be descriptions of the actual work situation, as on the day Stella was ‘[w]orking with a cat. Difficult to manage without Ctrl+z but I mean, what can you do?’ (FB, Stella, 2014/05/20, photo with cat and laptop), or when Frank went to work and was ‘contemplating if it was a mistake to take off the longjohns when arriving at work. [Organisation] could turn up the heating a bit.’ (FB, Frank, 2012/12/03). These quick disruptions are a way of taking a break.

Facebook becomes more time-consuming when actually engaging with the platform and one’s connections; in part these posts offer an opportunity to relate to friends and colleagues, and partly they help to create a certain identity, for example when Isabel discusses in the comments section to a link she posted about politicians’ income that the salaries in her organisation are among the lowest in the NGO sector. She takes pride in this fact and reasons that it helps to attract intrinsically motivated people (FB, Isabel in the comments, 2014/01/11). Isabel is strongly driven by values, so it does not come as a surprise when she comments on a picture showing an inspirational piece of art that she volunteers to work longer hours. For her it does not matter, as there is no difference between work and play (FB, Isabel, 2012/02/15, comment on a shared photo).

Facebook is also used to set clear starting and end points for one’s employment at an organisation – a beautiful example of which is provided by Heli:

What a day! Thanked by many lovely, competent, engaged and funny colleagues. And so many nice and beautiful words! Touched and thankful with an unreal feeling. Another four working days and then I am leaving [organisation] after six intense,
educational and eventful years. In a few weeks a new job awaits at [company]. (FB, Heli, 2013/05/02)

On Twitter this setting of clear end and starting points for a new job can be observed too, but the fleeting nature of information on Twitter decreases its relevance as long as people state their position and relation to the cause clearly in their description. One of my participants, Heli after changing jobs, continued to tweet about the cause of her organisation, but she stated clearly in the description that from now on, everything on Twitter was her own opinion and she no longer spoke for the organisation. This is one way to deal with the fact that Twitter, to a large degree, is interest-based and you somehow have to communicate to your followers that the premises have changed. Tweeting about starting or ending employment are almost the only examples I found on Twitter for the category of organisational culture. Given that Twitter is interest-based it is not surprising that people working for NGOs focus on directly or indirectly work-related information to spread, if indeed they actually they engage in work-related tweeting at all.

Organisational culture posts on Facebook are often taken out of context (e.g. ‘I am not told whom they bombarded with emails in the afternoon’) but presented in an often entertaining way to which other people in their network can relate. When Frank is ‘having yet another day with Lotus North Korea’ (FB, Frank, 2013/02/07), enjoys the opportunity to ‘use rubber stamps’ (FB, Frank, 2012/11/27) or is ‘looking at old PowerPoint presentations and is stunned by my own boringness’ (FB, Frank, 2012/11/15), many of his contacts can relate to it and join in with a light-hearted comment-conversation about their own work-related joys and hardships. This same participant happily shares how his organisation’s administrative system is draining all motivation from him:

FRANK started the first working day after his holiday with a certain feeling of confidence. That has quickly been shredded during the meeting with [organisation’s] internal administrative system. Now considering: career change – early retirement – the prospects of [making a deal] to get around 30 years of paid pension starting tomorrow. (FB, Frank, 2012/08/06)

What all posts, independent of category, have in common is that no participant during those three years ever criticised their organisation as such. The only criticism voiced was directed at administrative systems and dysfunctional technology:

The dongle does not work, the camp site has no working WiFi and the computer requires a WPA2 password when I try to share
It seems that no organisation in this study is the exception to the rule regarding obstructive technology. Pretty much every single participant posted something about the technology used by their organisation at some point during this observational period. It could be dysfunctional WiFi dongles, email servers that are down (though that was often met with delight, as it might be beneficial for organisations in general to look over their internal use of emails), policies as to which programmes can be used or the very late discovery of a voicemail:

FRANK has now, after extensive problem-solving by the PBX operator, a fully functional voicemail. Analogously with my assumption from last week it will increase my workload while simultaneously I will be perceived as more reliable. That’s of course if I choose to answer all messages in the future. (FB, Frank, 2012/10/29)

At times organisational culture posts would give a glimpse of the individual’s political belief system. As seen often for this category of posts, Frank offers a particularly entertaining example:

FRANK is searching for pictures in Clipart to illustrate a PowerPoint presentation. Cheap: 0 results. Greedy: 1 result. Love: 48 fantasillion results. Which fantasy world is Microsoft pretending we live in? (FB, Frank, 2012/08/10)

While being very committed to the values of his organisation when he is ‘feeling a little belligerent in the organisation’s name’ (FB, Frank, 2012/09/11), Frank simultaneously ‘wonders what managers, who are sending work-related mail close to eleven, think’ (FB, Frank, 202012/05/25).

In this category I also place posts in which my participants publicly praise, evaluate or criticise aspects of their work environment. It would not be connected to their actual job, their core activity, but always clearly connected to the workplace environment. Similarly, comments about chocolate being found in the organisation’s kitchen, or the great topic of the organisation’s annual summer party, belong in this category. These comments or pictures can be posted at any time during the day, but most often they are posted while or shortly after something has happened.

Heli posts a picture and admires her ‘view during a couple of working hours in the morning’ (FB, Heli, 2012/12/14) and makes fun of a convenor at a conference who displays a surprising limitation in their vocabulary, as made apparent by ‘“Shit, how fun!” said the MC. 27 times’ (FB, Heli, 2013/03/25).
Kathryn is equally praiseworthy when thanking her colleagues publicly for getting spoilt with baked goods (FB, Kathryn, 2012/05/10, photo of a bun) and a ride home after working too late (FB, Kathryn, 2012/02/13).

On Facebook, it becomes acceptable to say one ‘enjoys meetings which give energy and zeal. Like this morning’s planning meeting and today’s lunch date for example’ (FB, Heli, 2012/02/01) and to declare publicly one’s love in such matters. Melissa is probably having an especially good day at work when she declares ‘Love my job – love my colleagues! I even like to sit in an open landscape’ (FB, Melissa, 2013/01/11). It is equally acceptable to share that one has ‘apparently one hundred new messages on the other, so far unknown, voicemail. I have asked the PBX operator to delete them all’ (FB, Frank, 2012/10/26), that the fire alarm went off (FB, Kathryn, 2012/01/25) and on the same platform, albeit another person, that one just participated in helicopter underwater escape training (FB, Matteo, 2014/01/17, link to video). There are no rules as to what is important enough to be shared, as long as it interests someone.

One of my personal favourites (though just because I know nothing serious happened) is Melissa’s post about excitement at work:

Just heard my colleague say “No powder came out of this letter”...
Famous last words in the office? (FB, Melissa, 2013/03/22)

Organisational culture posts are characterised by very little to no organisational push but a fairly high degree of individual pull. The organisation does not necessarily encourage these or profit from them in any direct way. Considering that they were almost exclusively positive or mentioned just minor issues that can be found in any organisation, it can nevertheless be concluded that they probably have positive long-term effects, as they portray the organisation in question as a good/desirable employer.

The instances observed for all three categories together compose an online work persona that is carefully crafted, and I cannot assess in how far the individual is necessarily aware of the roundness and the consistency of this persona (I by no means suggest online schizophrenia – I simply do not know how much thinking and editing is invested before I see the result). Given the relative newness of the media, people learn while doing. A couple of participants mentioned during the interviews that it is necessary to mix work-related things with personal posts, in order to keep people engaged and following. They are also well aware of the greater appeal of posts with a positive message (which puts the employees of some of the observed NGOs at a disadvantage) and the importance of timing. As many people have hundreds or even thousands of connections it is important to post when people (on average) take a Facebook break, so that the posts are not drowned out by the rest.
6.4 Tentative online findings

In summary, the analysis of Facebook and Twitter behaviour yields two results. Firstly, work-related posts on Facebook show significant variety in regard to content and consequently the degree of work transgression. Four overall categories were identified, namely employer-sanctioned, employee-instigated, organisational culture and personal posts (the latter not being described in detail for privacy reasons).

Employer-sanctioned posts are usually encouraged by the employer and directly related through sharing a link from their employer’s page or a clear relation to the organisation’s cause. Employee-instigated posts represent the majority of posts in this sample and are focused on the individual’s work, fostering work relationships and helping the organisation (and its cause) through external links and the spreading of information. Furthermore, these posts help to increase legitimacy for the organisation’s activities. Organisational culture posts were found on the Facebook profiles of employees of almost any organisation. They are focused on the work environment and the organisational culture but not related to the actual cause of the organisation.

Secondly, employees of NGOs communicate exclusively in a positive manner about their work, which indicates that organisations need to worry less about employees ruining their reputation and potentially more about safeguarding employees’ boundaries.

This is a particular challenge related to social technologies, as learning how to use them beneficially is ongoing due to their rapidly changing nature. Many policy documents focus exclusively on the organisational side, whereas focusing on the individual might be equally important.
7. Boundaries and availability

In the following chapter I will present the results of the analysis of the interview material along with cross-references to the results of the online observation analysis. The two guiding questions for this study concern how social technologies affect the blurring of boundaries and what tactics individuals employ to meet these changing circumstances. In the literature two main ideas have been emphasised: the importance of the social environment (especially in connection to technology, e.g. Mazmanian, 2013) and the individual’s ability for boundary work (e.g. Cohen et al., 2009), which is intimately related to the degree of control and autonomy an individual enjoys. Social technologies pose certain challenges due to their particular affordances (visibility, editability, persistence, association), a notion developed by Treem and Leonardi (2012). These affordances will be linked to the three boundary characteristics of permeability, flexibility and blending. How they are connected, and in what way technology is enabling and constraining, will be discussed in the following parts.

The chapter is structured as follows. In the first half I shall focus on the question of how social technologies and their particular affordances interact with the boundaries between work and private life. In the second part I focus on the tactics people employ to address these changes. I suggest categorising four different behavioural patterns derived from the posting behaviour on social networks. These tactics are abstracted from examples provided by multiple participants. The tactics can vary according to changing circumstances, which will be exemplified by some of the changes I have observed over time that would have been impossible to assess with just a snapshot of the data at any one point in time. The longitudinal quality of the data allowed me to observe variations in behaviour caused by a change of jobs or personal circumstances, for example the birth of a child or work-related exhaustion.

7.1 Increasingly blurred boundaries

The 33 employees interviewed and observed for this study have shown a very strong sense of commitment to their organisations and/or the causes of their organisations. At the same time they have conveyed a rather traditional sense
of what work means for them in terms of income, meaning and development, as shown in section 4.2. How they look at work inevitably influences their perspectives and perceptions of the boundaries between work and private life. Even though their answers to what work means for them fit into a traditional perspective, their relationship with their employer is very positive, which increases how they identify with their professional role.

In section 4.3.1 my participants provide multiple reasons why working for a NGO is fulfilling and is (often) the only way to go for them. They connect with the goals of the organisation, they feel a unity with their colleagues and they see their work adding meaning to their lives. What they look for (and apparently have found in their respective organisations) are shared values and a high degree of autonomy concerning their tasks.

Two things stand out from the material. Firstly, my participants’ definitions of work are rather traditional, but when observing what they do on social platforms (and when), I see an indication that work is greater than what might be expected when talking about income, meaning and development described in 4.2. Very few saw it as a lifestyle, and no one defined it as a hobby. Working for a NGO nevertheless becomes quite defining for all different aspects of life, and therefore it might sneak into private areas more easily.

Secondly, when I expected to find a more uniform change in people’s relationships with work as a result of social technologies, it became apparent that it is a combination of the social environment (see section 5.1 for a presentation of the expectations people face and co-create) and the perceived technological affordances that influences the state of boundaries. In the following part I will focus on how affordances interact with different boundary characteristics.

The study makes it clear that some degree of boundary blurring happen for more or less all NGO employees participating in this study. For some people there is a blurring that comes with infiltration into their personal life by aspects related to the cause of their organisation, for example buying orange juice or flying on vacation, or being held accountable for everything they do with the expectation of superior moral behaviours (some examples are given in subsection 4.3.2). The other type of blurring that can be found is simply enabled by technology, namely people either pulling work-related matters into their private time (through technology) or having things pushed into their private time.

Boundaries that consequently limit or increase availability are constructed and negotiated by taking two aspects into consideration: expectations of the broader environment and technological capabilities, both of which influence the degree of autonomy regarding the amount of control the individual perceives they possess.
7.1.1 Visibility

Social technologies are different from other technologies in regard to the affordances of visibility, editability, persistence and association. Treem and Leonardi (2012) clarify that social technologies provide all four of these affordances to a high degree, whereas traditional technologies rank high on one or some of these affordances, but not on all. However, for the boundaries between work and private life, not all four affordances are equally as important, since visibility, persistence and association are more influential for the explanation of changing boundary characteristics than editability, as will be discussed in the following.

Certain device and platform features can make life a little bit easier. It can be seemingly tiny things, such as keyboard buttons that allow faster typing, tags in Gmail that enable better organising or the ability to switch easily between different accounts on Facebook and Twitter to “hide” the person behind the message, as described in subsection 5.2.3. In a very physical way they help to keep the noise level in an open-plan office down when people chat instead of talk, they help reduce costs by using Skype for international calls, they help to protect boundaries by not befriending/connecting with people, and technology helps to use commuting time more efficiently by allowing users to deal with, for example, emails or Facebook/Twitter messages.

The affordance “visibility” is influential because the individual, time and work become more visible. Social technologies are different to traditional office technologies like the telephone and email, as they make the individual as well as their work and the time during which work happens visible to a greater audience and in a more intrusive matter. The time stamps of posts give away if the individual shares a work-related link after hours or engages in a comments discussion at 5am.

With emails one can still work outside traditional hours but simply place the email into an outgoing folder for sending the next morning (as described by Molly in subsection 5.2.3). This facility is taken away by Facebook and Twitter, and there is no time delay. Similarly, Facebook shows the sender of a message if it has been read by the receiver – there is no reading and then not answering, unlike in the case of emails.

Furthermore, the individual is always visible online, since one’s Facebook or Twitter profile does not just disappear after 5pm. In theory, therefore, the individual is always accessible through a 24/7 online presence without an offline equivalent, simply because no one can possibly pay attention to what is happening on different online platforms to such an extent. The physical office is of course also there 24/7, but in general people are socialised into not expecting employees to work past 5pm. Online platforms have therefore increased the
expected reaction time, and employees are now quite aware of this change – as Jill points out in the “justification” part of section 5.2.

The increased visibility of the individual and their work contributes to an increase in boundary permeability (as described by Clark, 2000; Kreiner et al., 2006). Individuals are connected with their employer on Facebook and Twitter, they use the same profiles for both work and private matters, they post and see work-related matters on these platforms (Melissa and Stella point out that it also becomes more difficult to distinguish what work is, as it is ‘so easy’, in subsection 5.2.3), they check emails out of hours and during vacations, they take their work phones with them on vacation, they check their emails while still in bed and some reroute their work emails so they all end up in the same inbox, as highlighted in section 5.2. Not every individual does all of these all of the time, but all individuals do some most of the time. The mental boundary between work and private life thereby becomes more permeable.

The three kinds of boundaries (mental, spacial and time) also become more flexible. For example, not only the time but also the spacial boundaries between different realms become more flexible, as it is easier to answer a tweet, share a link or reply to a Facebook comment whenever/wherever. Boundary flexibility allows the individual to enact any given role at any given time and place, which in turn makes the mental boundary both more permeable and more flexible. All of these activities are linked intricately to the visibility affordances of social technologies, as both the individual’s profile and work are found in the same online space.

Consequently, through the more intimate connections with colleagues afforded by social technologies, the areas of work and private life might also be blending more, in that one learns more about one’s colleagues, which in turn facilitates friendship and a deeper connection. This would be most pronounced in regard to getting to know colleagues better. Blending involves the area around a boundary when it turns from being an exclusive domain to being more inclusive of the other. In other words, once I start learning about my colleagues’ political opinions or odd hobbies, through their posts and tweets, I can relate differently and the area around my boundary is no longer quite as exclusive.

7.1.2 Persistence

A point already addressed peripherally in subsection 7.1.1 concerns the persistent nature of information online. The individual’s online representation persists (the actual profile) as well as posts and tweets to which others might react. All of the posts and shared links persist, which consequently enables engagement even after hours, if they are related to work. This obviously works
the other way around as well, since personal posts continue to be accessible on
the individual’s wall and might encourage replies or comments during office
hours concerning personal matters.

Even the online manifestations of what some NGOs are fighting against
are permanently accessible once they are put online. Coming back to the fic-
titious example of saving unicorns created in subsection 6.2 the employees of
NGOs might find pictures of killed unicorns or proof of the destruction of their
natural habitat. These information might trigger extra engagement or these on-
line manifestations of potential wrongdoings might also just present a constant
reminder of all the things that should be done which Stella enlightens in 5.2.3.

Marlow and Marilyn, in subsection 5.2.2, point out the need to react
quickly to things online, before they spiral out of control, which is caused
by the affordance of persistence and the increased pace online.

The abovementioned information does not necessarily increase boundary
permeability or flexibility, but it does increase the blending of different areas,
and if the individual reacts to the persistent information found online, boundary
permeability and flexibility increase accordingly.

There is a sense of availability, just in case if something happens, and the
need to check Facebook and Twitter in case someone has asked something.
As with answering emails during a vacation, it serves the purpose to prevent
bigger crises that might escalate if not reacted to in a timely manner. In effect,
employees turn the organisation into a hyper-responsive, 24/7 communicator,
which can be seen in examples given in subsection 5.1.1 and 5.1.2. It has to
be clarified that not all employees engage in this kind of after-hours work, and
some manage to draw very strict boundaries indeed. From the 33 participants
of this study, nine had developed ways to limit work and private life to their
artificially assigned times. For the majority of these, though, these rules still
demand effort and conscious decisions – it is not just locking the door and
leaving.

One person’s enabling affordances can be someone else’s constraints.
Twitter and Facebook, even though they have a built-in memory function, do
not really enable the individual to deal with questions at some later point: ei-
ither you tweet, spread or answer something now, or it is gone. Consequently,
activities are placed outside the 9 to 5 frame. Facebook in particular has other
obstacles, for example limiting the audience for certain posts (not exactly an
intuitive function), how to unfriend people or how to limit the information den-
sity from each and every contact, all of which are described by my participants
in subsection 5.2.1.

All of these platforms have a tendency to push information into your day,
even outside the platforms’ bounds. For a lot of these push messages there is
surely somewhere a box to un-tick, but most people have neither the time nor
the patience to go on a time-consuming journey every now and then (basically, after every major update, one needs to go through the settings again). As easy as Twitter makes it to change between different accounts, Facebook evens out the playing field by making it extra intrusive for people who want to be administrators for an organisation’s page. They have to befriend another admin, which in many organisations would be simultaneously their boss, as Kathryn explains in the part “Technological level” of the subsection 5.2.1. It is these tiny things that make it easy for work to cross the boundary.

On the upside, this degree of integration enables the individual to receive faster replies from third parties, even politicians, and using of one’s private profile increases outreach and the possibilities to discuss and convince others on behalf of the organisation, as shown in subsection 5.2.2. Additionally, the organisation gains a human face. Members can be easier contacted and organised, and information dissemination turns into a walk in the park. Simultaneously with work becoming smoother and allowing for interruptions to attend to personal matters, it has also become more fragmented. Using the same accounts reduces the time spent checking different emails/social platforms, but it also burdens the individual with finding out when and where to work. It begs the question: When or how did work became so important and fast-paced that things cannot wait until the next day or after a vacation?

7.1.3 Association

Social technologies allow people to be associated with other people, with organisation(s) and with information (Vaast and Kaganer, 2013). This by itself can be very beneficial for all involved parties. For people the (public) association with certain other people can be good for their network, job opportunities or outreach. Examples of publicly associating with colleagues can be found in section 6.2, where Jacob and Sandra publicly praise their colleagues in Facebook posts.

Many participants mentioned the increased outreach in subsection 5.2.2. Technology can be enabling on an interpersonal level, especially when considering the opportunity to connect despite physical distance. Social technologies allow the individual to have vast personal networks, they allow one to acquire more personal knowledge of colleagues and, most importantly, they lower barriers to contacting people, which is especially useful for advocacy and lobbying work.

The association with one’s own organisation increases the audience for the message and facilitates member activation. Finally, the association with information is less important on Facebook and Twitter than on a corporate internal wiki, but being the first to publish fact-checked links is certainly helpful for
one’s own position as a central node in a large network. Online, catching the attention of an audience is crucial, and so it is beneficial for an organisation to have active members who can spread information and take a central position on many people’s networks. The sorting algorithm of Facebook that decides what and who is important to me, internally also called “Unicorn”, privileges people that post a lot (at least currently, that might as well change any day).

Not surprisingly, but probably necessarily, the participants in this study found reasons for working with very fluid boundaries and making sense of the situation. They struggled to find enough time for either one part of life during the dedicated time, there was an overall acknowledgement that the scarcity of resources in NGOs has to be compensated for in some way, and they expressed an overall investment in their work that is used as an explanatory factor. Both explanations can be seen in subsection 4.3.2. The perception of having an assignment instead of working hours and then adjusting work to the perceived “need” of the organisation contribute to the idea of ignoring time and instead working whenever/wherever, which subsequently increases boundary flexibility.

When individuals are “the same” at home and at work there is no need to separate channels or profiles, especially as one represents one’s organisation at all times, a point taken up in subsection 4.3.2 in the form of being ambassadors and in subsection 5.2.2 in regard to using one’s personal profiles, which is accompanied by a beautiful example for the association affordance of social technologies. It helps that the contacting strangers function on Twitter, for example, is perceived as a useful starting point for advocacy work. The affordance of association does not just increase the permeability of boundaries by bringing work and private identities closer together, but it also increases blending, as the area around time/space/mental boundaries is no longer exclusive.

For employees working in the field the lack of outside contacts and their reliance on colleagues for emotional support can be considered aggravating factors. If your environment is hazardous and your organisation has an understandably vested interest in keeping you as safe as possible, private contacts outside are the first to be limited, as explained in subsection 4.3.2, when considering the “place of work”. In these circumstances technology becomes the connecting line to friends, family and the outside world. Facebook in particular allows one to participate more in other people’s lives and to create and maintain a level of intimacy and normalcy that would otherwise, especially for people in the field, be out of reach.

As work can be considered a significant part of one’s identity, it is not surprising that former and current colleagues can be found on social technologies. Through the association with work (colleagues on these platforms, connecting with one’s employers page) any potential boundary becomes more permeable.
A contributing factor is that the personal becomes political when there is no distinction between one’s own opinion and one’s organisation, as reasoned by multiple participants in subsection 5.2.4 when asked why they censor themselves. On social platforms hierarchies are easily flattened, and one person can become the involuntary spokesperson for a whole group. A point seldom considered is the bigger environment outside one’s organisation. When people take out their laptop or Blackberry (which is mainly used by organisations) in the public realm, they simultaneously introduce work into said public realm. Without these devices, the ability to work would be limited, and so ultimately they change how we relate to public places and what is considered acceptable.

Some drawbacks are better hidden and less accessible on first thought. Social technologies in general, not just for the employees of this study, diminish the degree of privacy an individual enjoys. If an employee connects with their organisation and becomes an (involuntary) ambassador there is no more privacy or just being "personal". The personal becomes political as for example the case of Justine Sacco indicates (Ronson, 2015). A very unfortunate tweet about catching AIDS in Africa that led to the loss of her job as her organisation wanted to cut all ties with her. The possible degree of “being personal” is severely limited, and there is also the dissolution of professional distance when social technology mandates an online connection for admin requirements, as shown at the beginning of section 5.2.

Whereas in the past it was possible for employees to “hide” behind their organisation, this opportunity has disappeared with social technologies – there is no hiding, but a lot of people (not just employees of NGOs) are expected to blog, post and do things in their own name, thus giving the organisation a face. Finally, the mobility and the increasing pace that technology in general enables ultimately limits the individual’s possibilities to reflect on things and be fully present in the moment; instead of listening to a presentation, you are tweeting about it, as explained in subsection 5.2.1.

To be clear, these are (potential) consequences when work becomes overwhelming in some form or another. This does not need to happen, though, and people are perfectly capable of dealing with work or private life taking over for a limited period of time. Similarly, the flexibility that comes with blurred boundaries can be highly appreciated when trying to accommodate care responsibilities, or simply when getting to know more of the whole person one works with through connecting on social platforms. A persistent risk is manifested once the level of expectations is set to “hyper-responsive 24/7 communicator,” from where it is difficult to go back to a 9 to 5, five days a week routine.
7.1.4 Editability

Editability does not seem to be an equally important affordance in relation to changes in boundary characteristics, possibly because people overall are extremely careful in what they post and engage in significant censoring, either for their own or their organisation’s sake, as shown in subsection 5.2.4. Secondly, Facebook clearly indicates when a post has been edited and, often in comment discussions, it is just easier to correct things through a comment rather than editing the original post. Thirdly, people might still not be really used to the editing function, as Facebook started off without it. Fourthly, and potentially most importantly, once something is online, there is no taking it back. From a reputation-preserving perspective, it is better to own up to one’s mistakes. Twitter is even less forgiving than Facebook in that regard, as everything is immediately accessible by a wide audience. Editability is an important affordance of social technologies, but from the understanding I gained from my participants it does not seem to have an impact on either boundary permeability, flexibility or blending, and therefore it is not discussed further in this dissertation.

7.1.5 Availability and autonomy

The blurring of boundaries between work and private life in terms of time, space, platforms and people ultimately has consequences as to what is added and taken away from an individual’s life. The addition of certain work aspects does not necessarily have negative consequences – it simply implies a renegotiation of what are understood as “private life” and “work”. A greater boundary permeability and a consequent increase in availability are explained and justified differently depending on the external environment, the organisational context and individual preferences (which are also shaped by the environment).

At the same time, the participants of this study set and defend boundaries by restricting access, separating platforms, using technological capabilities (e.g. lists) and non-technological activities. Neither a lack of boundaries nor their enactment are absolute, but they do happen on a boundary continuum. As such, boundaries can be thought of as being located on a continuum rather than being stable entities determined by place and time.

Place and time can help to locate, stabilise or move boundaries, but ultimately it is the mental image – the mental boundary – that is constructed in relation to others and the environment that helps the individual to distance herself. The individual constructs the mindset that seeks to uphold boundaries not just between work and private life, but also between public and private. Social technologies have moved the concern from purely work/private life toward public/private, as they increase the exposure (and the availability) of the
individual.

Furthermore, boundaries can be conceptualised as the degree of availability, in that strict boundaries correspond to very limited availability whereas permeable or blurred boundaries increase the individual’s availability. Theoretically this goes both ways, thereby also potentially increasing the individual’s availability for personal matters during traditional work hours. There is no question that this happens for most of my participants, albeit to a more limited degree.

The three affordances visibility, persistence and association influence the availability of the individual to varying degrees, although they are relatively homogeneous across organisations. By using the same profiles, it becomes almost impossible to have “private” as opposed to “public” time online. The possibility of having private time without checking and updating work-related information online is what matters, though.

From the interviews and the above analyses (subsections 7.1.1, 7.1.2 and 7.1.3) of the relationship between affordances and boundaries, it can be concluded that availability increases through the three affordances visibility, persistence and association, whereas editability does not have a direct impact. A summary of the relationship between affordances, availability, autonomy and boundaries can be found in Table 7.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affordance</th>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Autonomy</th>
<th>Boundary blurring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
<td>Decreasing</td>
<td>Increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
<td>Decreasing and Increasing</td>
<td>Increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>Increasing partly</td>
<td>Limiting</td>
<td>Increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editability</td>
<td>No change</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
<td>No influence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1: Affordances, autonomy and availability

Availability in this context is regulated by boundaries. The spectrum could be reaching from a “lack of boundaries” or complete availability to the vigorous enactment of boundaries or very limited availability. On this scale, different activities regulating access to and of work can be located. These activities are intrinsically related to connecting/disconnecting. This degree of availability is not just what people wish for, but it is also what they project to the outside world. People do not act in a vacuum but they shape the environment in and with which they ultimately live and sometimes struggle, respectively.

When people “sneak a peek” at their emails at the weekend, no immediate
change in their environment has to happen, i.e. their own boundaries might change but their colleagues might not know and therefore do not need to relate to them. However, the moment the rumour spreads throughout their workplace, even if they do not answer any emails, their colleagues are still aware of the fact that they do actually look. Effectively, this means that they know what is happening. The same goes for Facebook messages or tweets, in that even if people do not react, their colleagues know they will have checked and are aware of things.

The aforementioned affordance “visibility,” outlined in subsection 7.1.1, contributes most significantly to the pressure the social technologies especially can contribute to in regard to blurring boundaries. When people actually react to messages or tweets, they change the rules of the game in a very tangible manner, and eventually the more people working beyond 9 to 5, the more constant availability becomes the norm.

To further the understanding of why blurred boundaries can be perceived differently, it is helpful to include “autonomy” – a second dimension in this analysis – which signifies the degree of control the individual has over their use of social technology in terms of how, when and for what. The degree of autonomy is not necessarily officially regulated or prescribed but is rather a matter of the social environment and negotiation. Most organisations are still trying to figure out how to use social technologies most beneficially (primarily for the organisation, but also for the individual to retain talent and respect individual needs and preferences).

The question I seek to answer in the first part of chapter 7 is how social technologies afford changes to boundaries between work and life. To this end it is helpful to establish how availability and autonomy are connected, in order to understand how the affordances of social technologies influence both factors.

One way to increase one’s autonomy and to take back control is to disconnect from technology. For the participants in this study there are two modes involved in disconnecting, namely voluntary and involuntary. People reason in terms of involuntary disconnection when they do not make an active decision to do so, for example when the battery runs out or there is no internet available. Turning off the email server or very strict “no mixing” social technology policies are just two possible organisational options to protect the individual, but they nevertheless might be perceived as involuntary disconnection.

There is no question that people in general want to be connected, as pointed out by Joshua or Jacob, as part of their personal life is online, for example by documenting one’s life on Instagram or connecting with friends through Facebook, chat services or other network-based communication services. For Millennials it is also a question of having grown up with the internet and not being willing to give it up.
There is also the option to disconnect more or less voluntarily either by using the capabilities of the technology (for example deleting the Facebook and Twitter app from one’s phone, disconnecting a certain email address or setting time limits on usage) or by employing analogous methods like working voluntarily for another cause, hiding the technology and meeting friends – overall, engaging with other activities.

Noteworthy in this respect is the allocation of responsibility, in that just one participant suggested that the organisation has some kind of responsibility (see Marcus in 5.1.2). The remaining participants ascribed directly or indirectly the main burden of making the relationship technology – boundary work to the individual. The argument proposed is that it is the individual’s responsibility to make sure their usage of technology is useful and not overwhelming.

A high degree of availability does not necessarily cause discomfort or dissatisfaction for the individual, a notion which is related fundamentally to the autonomy the individual perceives they have in their possession. My participants expressed a clear preference for being able to decide when and how to use social technologies.

At this point it should be clarified that the particular affordances of social technologies contribute overall to an increase in availability while simultaneously limiting the individual’s autonomy in terms of deciding when and how to use their personal social technology profiles. These two aspects influence how blurred boundaries are perceived; however, (social) technologies are a channel for communicating the expectations of the environment, and so they cannot be ignored when discussing the blurring of boundaries.

When my participants speak about autonomy in terms of technology usage, two things become abundantly clear. Firstly, certain activities and circumstances lead to the perception of limited autonomy. A lack of control cannot be understood without considering the expectations that are placed on the individual, as shown in section 5.1. When one’s boss sends emails around the clock, for instance, it sends the signal that a similar degree of availability is expected of others (irrespective of the actual intentions of the superior). More organisational expectations are described in subsection 5.1.2. In this context, combined with the limited resources described in subsection 4.3.2, people feel obliged to work beyond 9 to 5 (during these hours there are too many interruptions, so work shifts to evenings and weekends), and this can also contribute to the feeling of being overwhelmed by work.

My participants point to the problem that time constraints limit their ability to use the full capacity of the technology to assist in taking control. When there is no time to create lists on social platforms, for instance, individuals have no option to exclude others from posts and there is overall a very limited degree of control over what other people do on these platforms, which nevertheless
affects the individual, as demonstrated in the part “Technological level” in subsection 5.2.1 (e.g. changing relationship status, tagging, comments, replies) as well as when other people choose to interact with the individual. These activities are perfect examples of the affordances “visibility” and “association” and how they increase our availability.

Many of my participants describe their work as event-driven, either in terms of their organisation’s cause being very dependent on what is happening externally or because their job is to be aware of what is happening in society. This arrangement has the huge disadvantage that people have no control over when things are happening, and they simply sometimes interfere with family routines. Simultaneously, new technologies (Facebook, Twitter, but also email and smartphones) have made it easier to react to these events, especially when compared to being “on call” in the pre-smartphone times, when one actually needed to answer the phone and deal with a problem there and then. This again shows how visibility, association and persistence help to transcend boundaries.

For many people (even outside NGOs) the initial assumption is that the ability to work more flexibly will help to balance things, reduce stress and make it easier to combine work and other parts of life better. Unfortunately, it has also opened the doors for overbearing superiors to expect more during former non-work times in the form of a Blackberry or smartphone being taken on vacation, or the outspoken expectation that the employee will keep an eye on their work during parental leave, expectations described in more detail in subsection 5.1.2. Effectively, this limits the individual’s autonomy over their working conditions. This constant visibility, combined with the association between individual and organisation and the persistence of information, makes it difficult for the employee to ignore work.

As there are individual differences to the degree of blurring that is wished for and appreciated, there is no reason to assume that people who feel they enjoy a high degree of autonomy but have no or very blurred boundaries would be dissatisfied with the situation. Jacob’s repeatedly expressed idea (section 5.2) that he is the same person at work and in his private life supports this assumption. People that blur boundaries a lot with the help of technology, however, might contribute to an environment of blurred boundaries and a high demand on availability that is not appreciated by others.

A high degree of autonomy increases people’s motivation, as suggested by for example Ariely (2012) and Pink (2009). Therefore, a limited degree of autonomy is likely not perceived as being beneficial for boundary work. It is not an increase in availability or working at the weekend per se that is problematic but when people feel it is not their choice and not within their control. In that regard the Facebook message is more challenging than the Sunday evening work email, as the Facebook message is pushed into the individual’s presence
and the only way to avoid it is to not check one’s personal Facebook.

Ideally, the work email should not necessitate checking at the weekend, which brings us back to the affordances particular to social technologies and which are described in subsections 7.1.1, 7.1.2 and 7.1.3. People feel less pressure to react to the work email simply because it is so clearly limited to work, whereas Facebook and Twitter fall into a more liminal space with a less obvious purpose.

Not being able to use Facebook during a vacation, for instance, because work is there, or the discussion at work on personal statements made on these platforms, both examples given by my participants, indicates the risks of too much mixing and increases the wish for more autonomy over the use of these platforms and less boundary blurring.

All of the participants herein mentioned experienced or potential consequences of overworking, blurred boundaries and the scattering of the work day. Even when working 12 hours a day, people still manage to be social (no one works on a Friday night), but other matters are “prioritised away”. This in turn affects the individual’s job performance, as external inputs are needed to be good at one’s job. This blurred (new) way of working also has consequences on a more personal level, expressed in too little quality time with loved ones and possible burnout. The more people work, the more important work becomes, as explained by Marcus in 5.1.3, and the less time is dedicated to private interests, leaving even more time for work. It is a vicious circle that benefits neither the individual nor the organisation. The ultimate consequence might be the exit of the individual from the organisation.

Even though people co-create their environment, they can feel a lack of control over the expectations placed on them. If someone wishes for clear and strict boundaries but works in an environment where they are fluid and permeable, they might try to co-create their environment but most likely experience a certain level of disappointment regarding their influence.

### 7.2 Meeting the change

In this section I shall focus on answering the question regarding what tactics people employ to address the changing circumstances enabled by social technologies. The answer is twofold, with the first part centring on different offline boundary work tactics explained to me by my participants during the interviews. The second part focuses on my participants’ online posting behaviour (online boundary work). Understanding in greater detail what people are doing online sheds light on how boundary negotiations actually happen.

People meet the changing conditions through certain tactics they put in place to regain control. Kreiner et al. (2009) describe four types of bound-
ary work tactics (behavioural, temporal, physical and communicative) used by 
priests. Their study focuses on anything and everything that people do to ne-
gotiate the boundary between work and private life, and the tactics described 
concern general distancing attempted by individuals. The difference in rela-
tion to the present study lies in its focus on the technological aspect and how 
people negotiate changes enabled by social technology.

In the present study, these boundary work tactics are linked intimately to 
the enactment of boundaries and can be divided into three main types. The 
participants in this study describe tactics that can be summarised as “physical 
access restriction”, “technological separation” and “mental separation”.

Disconnecting has two elements for the participants in this study. Most 
people can disconnect from work-related activities but not necessarily from 
work itself, i.e. the unfinished report is just fine on one’s desk over the week-
end, but the worsening famine in a country in the Middle East, causing the 
starvation of thousands of people, does not take a break.

7.2.1 Physical access restriction

In the category “physical access restriction,” tactics are related to setting and 
enforcing artificial time boundaries, placing technology or certain platforms 
out of reach and engaging in unrelated, physical activities. This tactic is 
linked most closely to the affordance of visibility (see 7.1.1), since people 
restrict their own visibility as well as the organisation’s, in order to avoid be-
ing tempted into working. It is one way to address this particular affordance of 
social technologies.

The constant availability of technologies allows easier engagement with 
information, which brings the cause of the organisation to the fore after work. 
Reading about violations of women’s rights on your Facebook profile, for in-
stance, opens up the gate for work to resurface. This is not the total demolition 
of the gate that a call or an email (pushed to your attention) might result in, 
because these demand action, but we must nevertheless accept that work has 
still found a way back into the mind.

Even when using Facebook during evening hours and seeing work-related 
matters, people do not spread this information (see the part “Temporal bound-
aries through access restrictions” in subsection 5.2.3). This signifies a clear 
time restriction to their own posting behaviour to not appear boundaryless but 
it effectively is also a mental separation. This indicates an overlap between the 
two categories “physical access restriction” (enforced through artificial time 
boundaries) and “mental separation”. Not posting work-related things limits 
the individual’s visibility to outsiders.

Doing completely unrelated activities, such as yoga, painting, leaving the
usual environment described in the beginning of the part “Disconnecting from work” in subsection 5.2.3 as well as avoiding social technologies during vacation and turning off devices after work as explained in the part “Temporal boundaries through access restrictions” in subsection 5.2.3, addresses the later aspect of making the organisation(’s cause) less visible for the individual.

When my participants go away on vacation and engage with other activities after work, they try to prevent opportunities to work. In rare cases they use space as a boundary, so if they have to work at the weekend it is always at their physical workplace and not in the home.

7.2.2 Technological separation

“Technological separation” relates not only to separating platforms, but also to using these technologies’ capabilities to reduce access. This category is closely linked to the affordance of association (see 7.1.3) and its tactics are meant to either limit or prevent association with the organisation(’s cause) in the broadest sense.

Some of my participants avoid connecting with colleagues or their boss, or the boss abstains from sending friend requests. Some delete already befriended colleagues or they simply turn it around and befriend exclusively work-related contacts, as described in “Separating platforms” in subsection 5.2.3.

Especially in the NGO sector, not spreading organisational requests/links and not taking on the organisation’s fight can be one way of feeling in control (also in terms of identity control), thereby limiting association and consequently availability.

Some of my participants have multiple Skype accounts (theoretically this would be possible for Facebook as well, but the time investment might outgrow the benefits) and they unfollow their own organisation on Facebook and Twitter. In “Separating platforms” in subsection 5.2.3 the advantages of Twitter over Facebook are described, in that having multiple Twitter accounts and switching between them is surprisingly easy.

Certain technologies are used just for a particular part of life, such as work. With Facebook this works just to a very limited degree, though, because the idea is to spread the word to as many people as possible. Additionally, one is registered with their personal name, which ultimately leads to being found by private contacts (as mentioned, for example, by Isabel in “Justification” at the beginning of 5.2).

Being connected with one’s friends, the sole focus on work would bore them and simply lead to blocking. This defeats the purpose, so there is a need (as recognised by those participants who used Facebook also for work) to include some personal bits and pieces now and then, as explained by Melissa in
“Justification” at the beginning of 5.2. Consequently, it increases the association between the individual and the organisation.

Twitter and LinkedIn work differently in this regard, as they support the option to use just one role. For LinkedIn the whole idea is to be as professional as one can be, and Twitter is in general not built on the idea of a very personal network. Instead, people build networks based on interests, and therefore it is rather advantageous to focus on one aspect. This could be writing in a catchy and funny way, providing factual information on a certain topic, being an early adopter or an artist promoting different projects, and this includes equally well twittering as a human rights activist while working for a human rights organisation.

A different way of employing “technological separation” includes the more direct use of the technology’s capabilities. This idea is based on avoiding conscious involvement with things and being forced to make millions of small decisions throughout the day but instead letting the technology function as a form of barrier. Four main activities have been identified, namely using lists on Facebook, using the synchronisation inherent to platforms and technologies, actively choosing pull over push and, finally, exploiting the actual interface of a device, all of which are described in “Using the technology’s features” in subsection 5.2.3.

7.2.3 Mental separation

The category “mental separation” is less straightforward to grasp, as it could be argued that all the other tactics mentioned before, meant to address the particular affordances of social technologies, have some form of mental decision preceding their implementation.

For the majority of my participants the first two tactics did not solve their challenges completely, so they still had to avoid consciously doing certain things. People avoid sending emails out of hours, they dedicate a specific time to checking emails and they choose not to post what they have been asked to spread. In addition, people refuse to answer tweets after hours or steer conversations away from social media and back to traditional media. These tactics are described as working actively against one’s own weaknesses (being very engaged all the time).

I describe these elements as mental separation, because the individual has to make an active decision when work is already in sight. This is less about restricting work from entering one’s private realm and more about trying to not to let it escalate into something that has to be dealt with there and then.

The first two kinds of tactics are currently unattainable for some people, partly because their environment communicates either directly or more subtly
that another kind of engagement is needed/wished for, as seen in 5.1. For some people these might be unnecessary, as they find it easy to “switch work on and off”. For them the occasional or regular work-related post in their Facebook flow does not pose any disturbance, as they can easily go back to what they were doing before, which is described in “Mental distinction” in subsection 5.2.3. This ability nevertheless pre-supposes that these work-related occurrences do not demand immediate engagement.

For other people it is hard to disconnect, but to still be able to do it they will engage in other activities or with other people. Disconnecting from work requires them to connect to some other kind of activity or to use the more clearly delimited tactics summarised above in “physical access restriction” and “technological separation”.

My sample size is limited, but the assumption persists that the differences are not exclusively a personality question but are related instead to the social environment. Peer pressure might actually be capable of overriding personal preferences. The cause of the organisation could certainly have an impact, with people working with more severe issues like human rights being more prone to difficulties disconnecting than people working for better labour conditions in the developed world. This is by no means a value judgement about the importance of different kinds of cause – the assumption is simply that they might engage to varying degrees or with varying intensities.

Censorship as a way of addressing technological change

Two kinds of censorship in relation to social technology can be observed in my sample. The first form of censorship happens for the benefit of the individual and is concerned with keeping either personal or work-related aspects out of the other realm. The first expression of this limitation can be found in the uniform adherence to the rule to be personal but never private on social platforms. This also rests on the assumption regarding trust, in that friends will not post anything inappropriate.

In the second expression of this limitation the individual has no association whatsoever with work online due to the fear of repercussions (in this particular case the person had received threats before moving and changing jobs), to keep her personal brand consistent or because work-related topics would be completely irrelevant for their personal network. Everyone – irrespective of employer – censors themselves on social platforms, but most people do it for their own good, whereas the second category of censorship shows that employees of NGOs have an additional reasons.

The second form of censorship happens for the benefit of the organisation and can be summarised by the maxim “do not damage the organisation.” Fur-
thermore, it finds its expression in more detailed form in ensuring there are no pictures or comments that could in any way be used against the organisation. This includes any kinds of pictures, posts or comments that could associate the employee with something that goes against the organisation’s goals (eating meat, drinking alcohol, driving an SUV, etc.). As multiple participants explained, you become your organisation, even for your private network. In the worst case this means that all of a sudden they make you responsible for everything that they do not like about that organisation or its goals. It also means that they would pick up on all your personal wrongdoings to discredit your organisation. Restricted through self-censoring are also political opinions (especially when working in lobbying).

To assure this kind of censorship two kinds of institutionalised control are used, namely policies and colleagues. Through the digital connection to colleagues it is easy to make sure that any inappropriate or unfortunate posts or comments can be deleted in a timely manner. In the long run this also serves to educate and align the employees of an organisation.

The often referred to lunchroom threshold is effectively useless (for NGO employees), as one of my participants explained to me: just because you can say it in the lunchroom does not mean you can say it on a social platform. Especially in Scandinavia a lot of employees would argue they have a certain freedom to discuss work-related issues with their bosses, but none of that would be suitable for social platforms.

Censorship is linked intrinsically to identity and association with one’s organisation. In the past it might have happened through a uniform, but now it has become just so much easier to link an individual’s wrongdoings to their organisation.

7.2.4 A characterisation of online boundary work

As explained in the introduction to the second part of this chapter, the answer to how people address the changes enabled by social technologies is twofold. In the following, I will focus on four online boundary work tactics that can be distinguished from my participants’ online posting behaviour.

People on the internet have been classified according to their online behaviour (see for an entertaining example Buckels et al., 2014) in different ways. However, so far, no attempt has been made to bridge posting behaviour with the “employee aspect” on social media. My sample size is limited, but I would like to suggest a tentative categorisation with four types of online boundary work tactics. These different tactics offer one possible way to look at boundaries and how people treat them very differently.

The three different categories of work-related posts which signify differ-
ent degrees of online segmentation and integration assist with the suggested characterisation of online boundary work tactics. Posting employer-sanctioned matters (as presented in subsection 6.1) indicates a high degree of integration of different spheres of life into each other. On Facebook the audience can of course be mixed and consist of friends, family, colleagues and random acquaintances, but given the start of the network as a personal platform the majority of connections are most likely personal, not professional. Having a lot of employer-sanctioned posts shows that the boundaries between professional and personal realms are not very strong and are actually rather permeable.

This is not just related to the time dimension often used as an indicator for different realms, as posting on different platforms can be done any time; instead, it is related to the actual content of what is posted. Many employer-sanctioned posts indicate very permeable boundaries, whereas fewer of these suggest stronger boundaries. Someone with a very integrative approach to work and private life (open or professional online boundary work tactic) welcomes this work addition to their personal realm, and they most likely do not focus on having different identities and behaviours in different situations but concentrate instead on the idea of being the same person in any context. Figure 7.1 offers an overview of where the four different tactics can be located on the dimensions segmentation/integration and organisation/individual.

The three categories of posts described in detail in Chapter 6, and the personal posts not shown in this dissertation, represent themselves but can also be located on a continuum ranging from segmentation to integration. People with an open or a professional online boundary work tactic will have a greater amount of overall work-related posts with more employer-sanctioned and employee-instigated posts but fewer organisational culture posts. Individuals with personal or closed online boundary work tactics will have more personal, organisational culture and employee-instigated posts but fewer employer-sanctioned posts, if any at all. The following characterisation of different online boundary work tactics can be augmented by relating it to the segmenting-integrating continuum that is often employed in the work/private life balance literature (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Kreiner et al., 2009).

Furthermore, I will include the framework suggested by Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013), with its four online boundary management behaviours open, hybrid, audience and content. What I add to their suggested framework is an understanding of what people are actually posting. I very much appreciate Ollier-Malaterre et al.’s framework, but I would nevertheless suggest slight adjustments, in order to better incorporate the observations. Firstly, I do not include the self-evaluation dimension in my study. Therefore the findings are adjusted to the information I have accessed. Secondly, from an observational
Figure 7.1: Four different online boundary work tactics
Among my participants there is a group of people that do not mix. To some of these I would not have access online as they refuse work-related things on their private profile. Some do not post anything/much that I can see. It might still be possible that they post things related to their work environment (most likely organisational culture posts), but given the examples in other occupational groups there is a certain probability that this is not the case. Not everyone brings work to Facebook, and from what I can conclude from the interviews they very likely exclude work completely from this platform.

This behavioural pattern could be characterised as “closed,” or following Ollier-Malaterre et al.’s (2013) classification “audience”. People with a “closed” behavioural pattern are committed to their organisation, but simultaneously they see a need to defend their personal space (in this case their personal profile on Facebook) against being taken over by the cause of their employer. My estimation of the number of people belonging to this group from the sample in this study is around 12.

The “closed” behavioural pattern is associated with relatively strong segmentation and fairly clear boundaries in regard to the use of social technologies. People with this behavioural pattern will rarely be connected with colleagues, and if they do so, the number will be restricted to just a few. It is quite likely that they did not start out with this kind of very guarded behaviour and impermeable boundaries but experienced an undesired level of domain mixing and decided to take measures to guard against it. People using this kind of tactic could be very strict with space and time boundaries in the physical world as well, but it is not a prerequisite.

Depending on any restrictions on their profiles, the posting of employer-sanctioned posts could be quite nonsensical, as they do not reach a broader audience and might quite simply not add much value to their organisations in terms of social media outreach. If, however, they have large networks with a broad range of people, posting work-related matters would be very beneficial for the organisation, as the message would reach otherwise untapped audiences. They could still add organisational culture posts on a regular basis, but overall even that number should be greatly reduced. It is a distinct way of defending a certain space – in this case their online profile(s).

This brings the discussion back to the blurring of boundaries and what is so special about these online places people may or may not wish to defend. Work always has the possibility of transcending boundaries of space and time. For factory workers that could be the phone call asking them to fill in for an absent colleague, for fire-fighters it would be the pager calling them and for white collar office workers it might be the chiming Blackberry. What is different
about work entering personal online profiles is the disruption of a form of “intimacy” that existed before. It is akin to the moment when your boss joins the dinner with your friends, in that it changes what you talk about.

The second behavioural pattern present on Facebook comes in the shape of openness about the employer, regular check-ins at work-related places, naming the employer in the “about” section and frequent work-related references. Individuals employing this kind of tactic have one thing in common, which is a strong focus on their personal and work-related interests. These work-related interests are less about the organisation or the cause and more about people’s professional identity. This online boundary work tactic of “open self-promotion” can be divided into “personal” (most closely related to Ollier-Malaterre et al.’s (2013) “hybrid” behaviour) and “professional” (most closely related to Ollier-Malaterre et al.’s (2013) “content” behaviour). People with these boundary work tactics are extroverted, communicative and outgoing, at least on these social platforms.

Overall, a “personal” profile is not surprisingly tainted in a very personal way. Hobbies and other interests take up equally as much space as organisational culture post, and very few employer-sanctioned posts can be found, while even employee-instigated posts are not overwhelming in number. There are no after-hours work posts promoting the organisation, and when posting about work the majority of posts are concerned with organisational culture. In these posts mild criticism could be present, but it would not be anything about the fundamental ideas of the organisation; criticism would be about minor aspects of the work environment.

People with this boundary work tactic are fairly good segmentors, especially skilled at erecting mental boundaries easily. There might be the occasional after-hours engagement in a discussion that erupts after an organisational culture post, but overall there is no engagement with work outside of traditional office hours. This group has probably about five examples in this study.

The “professional” boundary work tactic shows a strong link to the individual’s professional identity. Individuals employing this tactic are committed to their organisations, there is little to no doubt, but equally important for them is the fostering of a clear professional identity on these social platforms. They offer their social capital to their organisations but focus simultaneously on advancing their own career. It is quite likely that other employees using a different boundary work tactic have a similar goal, but they do not exploit Facebook with the same determination.

Individuals displaying these characteristics could also be described as having a higher degree of professional loyalty than organisational loyalty in comparison to others. This is a deviation from Ollier-Malaterre et al.’s (2013)
“content-”focused boundary management behaviour, as they do not distinguish between the professional and the organisational aspects of an individual’s identity. The value of employees using a “professional” boundary work tactic for any organisation should not be underestimated, though, as they bring a tremendous amount of social capital and willingness to exploit it.

In my sample I came across three people that were consistently using a professional online boundary work tactic. At least two other people used this tactic for shorter or longer periods of time, thereby indicating that these borders are fluid and a perfect characterisation might not be possible. This boundary work tactic indicates a freer movement on the integration-segmentation continuum and greater openness toward adjusting time and space boundaries which do not necessarily need to be more permeable but are more flexible.

Finally, there is the “open” online boundary work tactic, which in the present study best fits those people who live for the good cause. Almost their whole online presence is focused on the cause of their organisation, and the open boundary work tactic enables the wider dissemination of the message. Often, their profiles will be open and searchable and clearly tainted in the organisation’s favour. (It leaves the question what came first, believing in a certain cause or working for the organisation and acquiring the ideology over time.) The people in this study using an open boundary work tactic seem to be ideology-driven, and the majority of posts are employer-sanctioned or employee-instigated.

It has to be pointed out that all of the participants in this study are highly opinionated and, to a certain degree, ideological. I assume if they did not believe in being able to make the world a better place, working for a NGO would not be an option. However, this does not mean that they could not work for another organisation and consequently change their posting behaviour, as the behavioural changes described in the following part indicate. As can be seen in subsection 4.3.2, the work environment can be exhausting due to the emotionally challenging content of the work and a constant shortage of resources.

Online there are no identity or role boundaries, and even though those people using the “open” tactic do agree that people need time off to recharge, they do not necessarily take that time themselves and are not overly clear with the setting of any kind of boundary. In my sample I identified 11 individuals using an open boundary work tactic.

Behavioural changes over time

As Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013, p. 660) points out, the macro-behavioural pattern of each individual most likely evolves and changes over time, probably not randomly but by following the punctuated equilibrium pattern of certain major
professional or personal incidents affecting the individual’s wish for segmentation or integration.

Over the past two-and-a-half years I observed many changes in the online behaviour of my participants. Some of them were triggered by the technology, for example when Facebook introduced lists or the “following option” for people not connected, or when Facebook let the user choose what to see from a specific person. Filtering according to important updates from remote connections and everything from close connections is a good idea, but at the same time it is an irrelevant adaptation if one already has 1500 Facebook friends. No one is going through that list to set the ticks for each person at the right place (as pointed out by multiple participants) and therewith effectively making Facebook’s algorithm the filter of your online experience. This has been taken even further now with the introduction of wide-ranging permissions for the Facebook app to collect data about users through different apps and smartphone functions (Grothaus, 2014).

However, in this section I will focus on behavioural changes that were not triggered by the technology itself but by changes in the personal or professional circumstances of the participant, based on the results of the study. The main reason for focusing on behavioural alterations triggered by a change in personal or professional circumstances is, firstly, the observable significance of these changes, in that I can see if someone has changed jobs but I have no way of knowing if someone has started using lists. Secondly, I am looking at the output on these social platforms, the posts, tweets and comments. I am not looking at the input my participants receive.

What these behavioural changes help to understand is that posting behaviour is contextual and mediated by our social environment. People adjust their behaviour according to the circumstances and the technological affordances, but neither of these is the sole determining factor.

Changing jobs

Working for a NGO is not, for everyone, an end in itself. People change jobs if new opportunities arise, and NGO employees are not necessarily an exception to this rule, even though all of the participants in this study except for one remained within the NGO sector or switched to public institutions (both public institutions that entered the picture are focused on organising and improving people’s lives).

The two people that moved to public institutions are Frank and Jacob. Frank did not change his posting behaviour significantly and kept his “personal” boundary work tactic. There was still a clear focus on organisational culture albeit with an overall increase in the number of posts. He would occasionally post links or references to his former employer, but not extensively.

In Jacob’s case it took me a while to realise he had actually changed jobs,
as he initially continued to post employer-sanctioned matters from his former employer. Eventually the frequency declined, but he did not stop completely. Organisational culture posts were exclusively related to his new employer, but posts that would be considered employer-sanctioned had a clear link to his former employer. Jacob stayed within the “professional” boundary work tactic (still posting things fostering his professional identity) but he reduced employer-sanctioned posts significantly.

Kathryn left her job at her organisation 18 months into the observation period, just to start immediately volunteering for the same organisation. The timing of the posts changed (more weekends and evenings), but if anything they became even more enthusiastic than before. Kathryn used an open boundary work strategy before and after the change.

The outlier in the sample switched to the private industry. Interestingly enough, Heli changed her posting behaviour most radically from open and extremely organisation-focused to personal. There were just two posts in a whole year directly related to the actual content of her new work, whereas beforehand it would often be two per day plus one indirectly related or concerning the work environment. In the comments to one of these two posts she was confronted with very harsh critique from members of her network, and initially I assumed this might have contributed to the significant reduction in the number of posts. In a later email exchange, though, she told me that her posting behaviour had changed so radically because her new employer has a very strict social media policy.

Heli also continued linking and posting things directly related to her former employer, as there was an interest in, possibly even engagement with, the questions her former employer worked with that went far beyond the paycheck. Heli was the participant who pointed out in her Twitter description that she was continuing to engage with and tweet about the cause of her former organisation but from now on as a private person and not in the name of her organisation. It is a telling example of her commitment to the cause of her former employer.

All four examples indicate that even leaving a non-governmental organisation does not necessarily end the engagement with the cause on a personal level – in this case shown on social platforms. These four people also show that engagement for the cause clearly exceeds membership in the organisation, which might partly explain why the use of personal profiles for the organisation in the NGO sector is fairly commonplace and something people do not necessarily question.

Posting for the organisation is potentially not perceived as such but instead as fighting for the cause. This would indicate a mental detachment between organisation/paid employment and working for the cause. The examples show
that a change of jobs can relocate an individual’s boundary work tactic significantly on the segmentation/integration dimension, if demanded by the organisation.

**Changing family situation**

Three of my participants had a child during the observational period, while some already had children, though I was unable to observe any potential before-and-after effects, which is why I will focus on the three participants that became parents. First of all, there is no discernible pattern as to what happens once a person becomes a parent. The posting behaviour (and to a certain degree the online times) change, but the behaviour of the three did not change in exactly the same way. Common to all three of them was their embeddedness in a very progressive social security system which makes them eligible for parental leave (which comes in the form of financial compensation for being a parent). This in turn might reduce the potential effect of gender. All three of them took parental leave for more than three months.

Jacob did not reduce the frequency of his posts, and it took a while to change their character, but eventually he posted more personal posts, and when posting about work these instances would fall into the first and second categories. Not surprisingly, there were almost no organisational culture posts observable.

Melissa, on the other hand, reduced her frequency significantly, and apart from an occasional employer-sanctioned post there was no work to be seen. Judging from her Facebook wall, she really did take time off. It was also her who started with Twitter right before her parental leave and then deactivated the account thereafter. These occasional employer-sanctioned posts are not overly surprising given that she was still connected to her employer on Facebook and consequently saw all these calls for action. The sharing was really just two clicks away. Even in Melissa’s case, it cannot be argued that she really changed her boundary work tactic, as it was still open (connected with colleagues, connected with her employer, etc.), but she simply dropped the organisational part during her parental leave.

Kathryn’s case is a bit different, as she quit her official job with her organisation but continued to work voluntarily for them. In her case the timing of the posts changed (voluntary work is mostly in the evenings and at the weekends) and the content, but not in the category of posts. Before she would post where she was with work and tag people to say thank you. Similarly, people she worked together with would tag her for saying thank you. After ending her employment she would post about her voluntary engagement and people would tag her for similar reasons. For this study the focus is on paid employees, but in her case the smooth transition between employment and voluntary engagement was striking, which is the reason for discussing it herein, because
it shows one important aspect – for some of my participants their identification and commitment to their organisation goes far beyond the pay-check.

**Taking time out**

Two of my participants changed their behaviour in regard to social technologies because they felt overwhelmed by work. One of them mentioned it during our interview (I have no observation of these particular changes). She explained to me that she deleted the Facebook app from her phone during a period of time when work was too much. After about a year she reinstalled the app, but she admitted that it was liberating and that this involuntary time out had changed her overall relationship with work and these platforms.

The second participant just disappeared from Facebook all together for a couple of months, without much warning. She posted remarks before about leaving or reducing her time on Facebook, but it was always half-joking, so when she finally really did not post or comment on anything, it was surprising. From the posts beforehand and the insights gained during our interview I assume it was neither work nor the technology alone that triggered the need for a time out but more the combination of having work on Facebook and struggling with when and how to answer requests and the function of Facebook for her work. She did not deactivate her account and she was shown as being online (Facebook betrays any wish for privacy in the most obnoxious ways), but she simply did not interact.

Both acts can be understood as liberating, as they free the individual from the day-to-day negotiations about what and when something is acceptable for them personally. At the same time they also limit the individual in regard to using the technology’s full potential for personal and potentially work-related activities.

### 7.3 Summarising

In the first part of this chapter the focus was on answering the question as to how social technologies afford a change in people’s boundaries between work and private life. The results show that visibility is by far the most influential affordance changing the boundary characteristics permeability, blending and flexibility.

Persistence and association are important affordances that challenge especially boundary permeability and blending, but simultaneously they are closely connected to visibility, without which neither persistence nor association would be quite as influential. Editability, on the other hand, has not evolved as a clear influence on boundaries in the context of public social technologies.
The particular affordances of social technologies, by changing boundary characteristics, also influence an individual’s availability. If the affordances increase availability and maybe even decrease autonomy, boundaries become more blurred and the individual can find themselves in a state of being “accessible and guided” in their behaviour around these social technologies.

Question two is answered in two steps. People use offline and online boundary work tactics to address the changes enabled by social technologies. The offline boundary work tactics are overarching whereas the online boundary work tactics are concerned with the boundary negotiation that is ongoing online.

The answer to question number two, regarding the tactics people use to address these changes, as derived from the interviews, can be summarised through three overarching offline boundary work tactics, namely “physical access restriction”, “technological separation” and “mental separation”. Physical access restriction and technological separation are stricter, and the idea is to prevent work accessing certain spaces or times, to avoid breaching the mental boundary. Mental separation, on the other hand, concentrates on dealing with work incidents once they have occurred.

In the second answer to question two, online observations were employed. From the amount and the mixture of the online posts in the different categories it is possible to draw conclusions as to what kind of online boundary work tactic an individual is using. Four online tactics were identified: closed, personal, professional and open, all of which can be located along the segmentation-integration continuum.

These results offer a partial answer to the research question regarding how social technologies affect the blurring of boundaries and what ways people employ to deal with these changing conditions. Social technologies affect blurring, as they offer at least three different levels of work intrusion into a more personal realm. People deal with these intrusions by adjusting the kind and the amount of blurring that is afforded by the technology, and so consequently they employ different online boundary work tactics. The environment in which the individual is embedded plays a major role in their posting behaviour and the effects on boundaries, but the environment is shaped fundamentally by individuals. If an individual is very focused on strong and impermeable boundaries, they will contribute to creating an environment that enables them accordingly.
8. Shifting boundaries

Social technologies are still fairly new and constantly changing. While writing this dissertation, Facebook has introduced new terms of service (ToS) at least twice and more or less completely changed its appearance. Social technologies challenge our ways of doing things – as have numerous other technologies before them – and so to keep with the pattern, even now some technology critics suggest that these technologies will lead to the downfall of the occident\(^1\) despite there being very little actual evidence that any are even close to ending civilisation. Quite on the contrary, it has been suggested that Twitter and Facebook have been highly enabling for the Occupy Movement (DeLuca et al., 2012) and the Arab Spring (Lindsey, 2013; Sander, 2012). What remains fascinating is that we seem to need to learn with every new technology that it is going to be fine, and so we just need to adjust and learn how to make it useful rather than intrusive.

In this dissertation the focus has been on the changes that the interplay between technology and the human and the social environments are co-creating. These changes affect the ways in which we work and the ways we relate to work, and they make it necessary to study the consequences for our understanding of our work and our boundaries between it and private life.

Leonardi and Barley (2008) and Leonardi (2011) use the affordance perspective to reason how the human and the material are fundamentally imbricated, while Treem and Leonardi (2012) use the idea of affordances and suggest four that are particular to social technologies. The present study applies the affordance perspective to the study of the interplay between social technologies and boundaries.

The work-private life balance literature has addressed boundaries and boundary work. Kreiner et al. (2009) suggests different boundary work tactics used by priests, while Nippert-Eng (1996a,b) describes the everyday rituals and objects we use to transition between work and private life. Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013) proposes in a theoretical model four different online boundary management behaviours. What the present study contributes is a description of offline boundary work (things people do to set boundaries with and

\(^1\)A phrase originally coined by Oswald Spengler as the title to his two-volume book “Der Untergang des Abendlandes”
Despite technology) and a study using Ollier-Malaterre et al.’s framework as a starting point, in order to gain a better understanding of online boundary work.

Furthermore, the particular affordances of social technologies move the discussion from the boundaries between work and private life toward a discussion on those between public and private. Visibility, persistence and association move the concern from the private to the public realm. When, previously, technologies challenged the boundaries between work and private life, social technologies complicated the situation by additionally challenging the boundaries between the public and the private. So far, this has been a problem for just a very few professions (for example politicians, actresses). NGO employees represent an interesting group among the professions, which makes the study of their boundary work a useful addition to the literature.

In the present study, it is firstly demonstrated if and how social technologies with their particular affordances contribute to the blurring of boundaries. This is closely connected to the segmentation/integration continuum and how social technologies might help or hinder either of these choices. Secondly, different offline and online boundary work tactics are suggested, as they provide an answer to how people address the boundary blurring potential of social technologies online and offline. These different forms of boundary work follow argumentatively the discussion on affordances. Thirdly, it is reasoned how social technologies enable the change from discussing work-private life boundaries to addressing issues surrounding public-private boundaries.

The structure of this chapter follows the argumentation above. The particular affordances of social technologies and their influence on the blurring of boundaries are discussed first, followed by a discussion on the different offline and online boundary work tactics which are fundamentally linked to the affordances of social technologies. If these affordances were different, offline and online boundary work would be different as well. Concluding, after elucidating the affordances and boundary work, it is possible to discuss the shift from work-private to public-private.

### 8.1 Affordances of public social technologies

The affordance perspective in relation to technologies has seen a rather slow uptake in the organisational studies literature, which might be founded more on a generally limited use of a technological focus in organisation studies (Orlikowski and Barley, 2001; Orlikowski and Scott, 2008). Inspired by the field of human/computer interaction and its focus on design, Hutchby (2001), Leonardi and Barley (2008) and Leonardi (2011) argue for the usefulness of the affordance perspective in organisational studies. Fayard and Weeks (2007) provides an example in this regard when examining the social and physical
affordances of an environment that enables informal interactions.

The present study contributes to the literature in two ways. Firstly, it adds the use of the affordance perspective to study boundaries between work and private life. Given that different people perceive different affordances of objects (Gibson, 1979) it is quite likely that looking at affordances of different artefacts or organisational technologies would help explain why even people within the same organisation can experience work-private life boundaries in wildly different ways. Secondly, the present study contributes by providing insights into the relationship between the particular affordances of social technologies and the boundaries between work and private life and the boundaries between public and private.

Recent studies incorporating the affordance perspective to study social technologies have focused on social technologies implemented by organisations, as the overview provided by Treem and Leonardi (2012) shows. Treem et al. (2015) add to that canon of research the conclusion that people’s experiences with public social technologies influence their expectations of organisational social technologies. Vaast and Kaganer (2013) were among the first to actually look at the affordances of public social technologies and how they are addressed in the social media policies of a variety of organisations.

As social technologies take on an increasing role in our experience of the online world (for example by Facebook becoming an almost default option for logging into unrelated websites like airbnb.com) it becomes important to address how the particular affordances of social technologies challenge the boundaries between work and private life. The present study contributes to the research by arguing that especially the affordances of visibility, persistence and association contribute to the challenges experienced through social technologies, as shown in section 7.1. The persistent visibility of the individual and the public association with the organisation blur time and space boundaries – and consequently mental boundaries. This happens first and foremost for the boundaries between work and private life, but ultimately the boundaries between what is public and what is private are blurred.

Vaast and Kaganer (2013) finds that the fourth affordance, described by Treem and Leonardi (2012), namely editability, is barely considered in the social media policies that are part of their sample. Similarly, in the present study, editability has no great bearing on the boundaries between work and private life.

The differences in the importance of the four affordances of social technologies the present study suggests, as compared to Treem and Leonardi’s (2012) study, could have three possible explanations. Firstly, the particular context of my study with NGOs could be the reason for the relative unimportance of the affordance of editability. As many NGOs are vigorously scruti-
nised, it could be better in terms of reputation to simply own up to flaws or errors and then correct them publicly. It could also be that everything that is written is double-checked endlessly before publishing so that editing becomes obsolete (unlikely as social technologies demand fast response times).

The second reason for the reduced importance of editability could be caused by the differences between public and inter-organisational social technologies which most likely do not challenge the boundaries between public and private (as they are less public by default), though they potentially require more in terms of professional reputation maintenance from the individual. This increases the importance of the editability of information, as the individual is more considerate about their standing and advancement within the organisation. Turning the argument around implies that editability is less important on public social technologies.

Thirdly, public social technologies have changed considerably since Treem and Leonardi published their overview in 2012 (given the publishing time in academia, the relevant year is likely 2011 or 2010). Facebook, for example, has added the “edit” function for posts and comments to posts; however, it is shown in the field of the post or comment that it has been edited. The function itself is relatively new and people are potentially slow to adopt it. Instead they just correct their response in a second comment. The technical features of public social technologies might help to explain the difference in importance.

The present study shows that the particular affordances of social technologies challenge work-private life boundaries as well as public-private boundaries differently as compared to more traditional technologies like phones and emails. It also suggests that not all affordances are equally important in relation to the boundaries between work and private life. Editability does not contribute to the blurring of boundaries to the same degree as the other three affordances.

8.2 Offline and online boundary work

In section 7.2 it is shown that boundary work can be divided into offline and online tactics. The following discussion on the subject will therefore be divided into two parts, one addressing offline and one addressing online boundary work.

8.2.1 Offline boundary work and social technology

The boundary work literature has focused on everyday role transitions (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2000; Kreiner et al., 2009) and questions of identity (Kreiner et al., 2006). Nippert-Eng (1996a,b) outlined beautifully how we use everyday
rituals and objects to transition between the realms of work and private life. What this literature has not covered, though, is the role of technology in general and social technologies in particular.

The literature dealing with technology and boundaries has covered mobile phones (Bittman et al., 2009; Towers et al., 2006; Wajcman et al., 2008) and other hand-held devices but reaches conflicting conclusions as to what might constitute the consequences of these technologies. Barley et al. (2011) and Middleton and Cukier (2006) include hand-held devices but focus more on what they actually help us to do (e.g. check emails constantly).

Mazmanian (2013) is one of the exceptions when concluding that people within the same organisation can develop heterogeneous practices for the use of Blackberrys and emails. Two studies actually looking at social technologies (the widespread, public ones as opposed to inter-organisational social networks) in the workplace are Charoensukmongkol (2014), who suggests that social media use at work does not necessarily lead to negative outcomes, and Ticona (2015), who focuses on the potential for emotion regulation and partly on how technologies are used to reinforce boundaries.

In section 7.1 the results of the analysis of the interviews indicate that technology has certain enabling and constraining affordances, but the variety of experiences my participants provided also indicates that these alone do not determine if an individual perceives the technology as helping or hindering their preferences for segmentation or integration. In the boundary work literature it is suggested that people a) have a “natural” preference for either segmentation or integration (for example Ashforth et al., 2000) and b) that they use certain strategies to attain their preferred state on the continuum (for example Kreiner et al., 2009 and Nippert-Eng, 1996b).

Given the results of this study, I suggest that, especially considering changes enabled by social technology, our social environment plays a major role in finding and keeping our place on the segmentation/integration continuum. Expectations placed on us by our organisation, the external environment and personal contracts strongly influence in how far we perceive the technology as hindering or helping, and in how far we can use it to secure our preferred spot on the separation/integration continuum.

Furthermore, we as individuals are part of the social environment and consequently part of co-creating, as suggested in subsection 7.1.5. This point can hardly be emphasised enough, since social technologies allow for changes to happen, but the social environment has a far greater impact on the actual outcome than – especially technology-critical – people fear. The outcome simply depends on more than just technological affordances.

Part of this co-creation are the offline boundary work tactics individuals employ. Not unlike the boundary objects and routines Nippert-Eng (1996b)
describes in her study (e.g. keys, calendars, clothes, talk and food), the present study has shown that people use some of the affordances of different social technologies to get closer to their preferred side of the continuum. As suggested in section 7.2, people use physical access restriction, technological separation and mental separation as tactics within the frame of offline boundary work.

All of these options are partly dependent on the organisational demands people feel are placed on them. In some organisations very strict separation is unusual and not necessarily wished for by the organisation, while in other companies strict separation is no problem and approved from the organisational side, as elucidated in subsection 5.1.2.

A similar distinction is experienced in terms of posting on behalf of the organisational cause. All of the participants emphasised repeatedly that no one forced them to do any of the integration activities but they nevertheless felt they did not give their best for their organisation if they did not increase their availability, as analysed in subsection 7.1.1.

The present study contributes to the current work-private life boundary literature in two ways. Firstly, specific offline boundary work tactics in relation to social technologies used by individuals are suggested. Kreiner et al. (2009) offer a detailed description of the boundary work done by priests, but no particular attention is paid to technological channels, and social technologies were not considered at all.

Kreiner et al. (2009) suggest behavioural, temporal, physical, and communicative boundary work tactics which cover different kinds of boundaries (spatial, temporal, mental). The present study suggests three offline boundary work tactics related to the use of technology. People use physical access restriction to limit their availability i.e. they hide the technology or bring distance between themselves and the technology. Secondly, they employ the tactic of technologically separating by using certain platforms or devices exclusively for certain purposes. Thirdly, the participants of this study use mental separation to compartmentalise different areas of life coexisting on a certain platform. Those offline boundary work tactics can be understood as an addition to Kreiner et al.’s (2009) study by focussing on the technological aspects of every day life.

The importance of the social environment is the second aspect the present study adds to the existing boundary theory in relation to technology. Previous studies have not rejected the social environment as an influencing factor, but equally they have not focused on it or the individual’s co-creation thereof. This is one of the intersections with the perspective of sensemaking, as it emphasises the notion that how people reason about their choices is a social process and it becomes clear that people actively participate in the enactment of the
environment in which they live.

8.2.2 Online boundary work

The boundary literature is very clear about the segmentation/integration continuum and that different people have varying needs for segmentation and integration in different contexts. We do not quite know if and how it is applicable to online boundary work, but we do have a conceptual idea provided by Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013), albeit there are no empirical examples or exploratory studies yet.

Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013) suggest four different boundary management behaviours (open, content, audience, hybrid) by combining segmentation/integration with online self-evaluation. This dissertation adds two things to this framework. Firstly, it offers a first empirical “testing” of the suggested behaviours, and secondly, it adds the “work” component more clearly by categorising online posts on Facebook into four distinct categories, three of which are work-related. Instead of self-evaluation the “work” dimension (organisation/individual) is included.

The suggested adaptation of Ollier-Malaterre et al.’s framework includes a renaming and changing of description for three of the categories. Ollier-Malaterre et al.’s (2013) audience behaviour becomes a “closed” tactic, with a stronger focus on the defence of the personal space and strong segmentation. Her hybrid behaviour is still open and somewhat integrated, but the focus is more on the promotion of one’s personal interests and hobbies, which is why I call it the “personal” boundary work tactic.

Ollier-Malaterre et al.’s (2013) content behaviour turns into a “professional” online boundary work tactic, as the focus shifts to the actual posts that are very much centred on the professional identity of the individual. Finally, Ollier-Malaterre et al.’s (2013) open behaviour stays “open” in my description also, but in the context of NGOs I would like to add that people using that form of boundary work tactic are extremely accessible and focused on the cause of their organisation.

When relating back to the different work-private life metaphors Cohen et al. (2009) introduce, it can be argued that social technologies in the “right” environment enable a lot more of the instances that would make people experience a reduction in their control, described by employing the metaphors “seeping,” “invading” and “overwhelming.” This is not a forgone conclusion given that the experiences of my participants varied.

Social technologies add a channel that people might not have fully mastered yet, i.e. the relationship is not mature. At the same time, they do allow for the means to avoid the seeping, invading and overwhelming elements, if
used consciously. What people seem to need is a certain leeway for different kinds of solutions at different times, which is also emphasised by Cohen et al. (2009). Especially for people working in the NGO sector there is tension between passion for their work and the need to adjust to certain routines, either for their own sake or for their colleagues’ sake.

The description of online boundary work tactics is based on the online observation of different work-related posts in social technologies. These observations add a second important contribution to the literature, in that not everything people do online for their organisations has the same “quality”, not everything is equally closely related to work or equally intrusive for the private realm. It is therefore important to differentiate what exactly people post, share and comment online.

8.3 From work-private to public-private

Boundaries between work and private life have been blurred in the past in many situations and for some professions, such as actresses and politicians – the phenomenon did not start suddenly with the widespread introduction of phones or Blackberrys. Certain professions, like the priesthood, have always faced difficult negotiations about their boundaries, and it could even be argued that during the agricultural period work was quite literally very close to home.

The priests studied by Kreiner et al. (2009) developed and used quite elaborate boundary work tactics framed in terms of reducing work-home conflict and reaching the desired level of segmentation or integration between these areas. It can also be understood in terms of “availability” and regulating one’s availability for the members of the community. With or without technology, people seek access to their priest.

There is a relatively clear difference between availability and publicity (public), because the former can still happen in the private realm, whereas the latter involves the exposure of the individual to greater public scrutiny. The challenges associated with availability experienced by priests most likely also apply to other professions in small communities, for example nurses, doctors, midwives, teachers or voluntary fire-fighters.

Furthermore, we see a difference between being public online or offline whereby the latter can be terribly embarrassing, as any major or priest that has decided to get drunk and sing loudly in the middle of the village can confirm. Overall, however, the damage is limited, as few people will have observed it first-hand and there is rarely any proof in the form of a YouTube video.

Being public online, on the other hand, opens up the individual’s behaviour theoretically to another seven billion people – and the proof is quite durable. In Europe, Google has agreed to remove certain search results if the individual
requests it and argues convincingly for its removal (Google, 2015). This action, however, does not delete the actual evidence – it just makes it more difficult to find. Very likely, this does not apply to screenshots of Facebook posts or Tweets that indicate a momentary lack of good judgement, and so once it is online, it is out there for a very, very long time.

In the pre-social technology era, a certain exposure of the individual existed, i.e. being public existed. It was nevertheless bound by place – it was to a certain degree local. With social technologies “publicity”, being public, has become global, and we have therefore gone from a local place to a global space.

Without technology people would still bring their work home, either in their minds (sometimes it is difficult to not think about work) or in the form of papers or reports. With the advent of emails, mobile phones and laptops, though, this simply accelerated and facilitated. What is different with the ubiquitous presence and use of social technologies is the blurring of the public-private boundary. This particular kind of blurring has until relatively recently only been a challenge for “public persons” such as politicians or actresses, but nowadays it affects more and more different professional groups.

The boundary work literature has not been outspoken about the influence of being, or the action of becoming, “public”. Ashforth et al. (2000), Kreiner et al. (2006) and Kreiner et al. (2009), despite focusing on role transitions and boundary work have left the “public” out of their reasoning. For Nippert-Eng (1996b) and Nippert-Eng (1996a) the focus has been on routines and boundary objects related to the work-home boundary. Implicitly, however, the idea of “the public” influencing our behaviour lingers, as many of the qualitative studies depart from a social constructivist point of view. Even though the idea of behaviour becoming public or being influenced by the public is not directly addressed, the assumption of the environment influencing our norms and behaviour still prevails.

People have blurred and blur their public-private boundaries for personal reasons, to which the widespread use of Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram and many more social technologies attests. Nothing is too unimportant or personal to be shared. The difference for the NGO representatives in this study lies in their willingness and active blurring of their public-private boundary for work-related reasons. This is rather new and is enabled by the particular affordances of social technologies, as explained in section 7.1.

The affordance “persistence” in particular is increasing the challenges experienced with behaviour and opinions becoming public. Everything that is public is not only widely spread, but it is also accessible for a very long time. The right to be forgotten is severely limited, whilst visibility (24/7) and association (link to organisation) contribute to the individual being more public,
persistence makes it permanent and potentially troubling.

The persistence of information online is coupled with “glass walls,” to use the metaphor proffered by Pearson (2009). The dilemma of privacy and being public online has been considered at least by studies done in the field of media and communication. Boyd (2007) and Papacharissi (2009) problematise the dislocation of social worlds, albeit not in relation to the organisation. Social technologies “dislocate” social worlds, and in connection with work this becomes challenging for the individual and at times also for the organisation.

Corporate ambassadors have always existed, and they even align themselves online with the organisation they represent. Furthermore, they safeguard the interests of their organisation through their online behaviour, and they are committed to the organisation and live and breathe it. This is supported by self-imposed expectations, externally-imposed expectations and the balancing act between these elements. In the case of NGOs, which are more value-driven, their employees (and volunteers) are ambassadors for the cause instead of being “corporate (brand) ambassadors”.

The need to construct a form of balance between self-imposed expectations, externally-imposed expectations, the affordances of the technology and the wish for privacy explains why we now need to look at offline and online boundary work.

This study emphasises a move towards the blurring of public-private boundaries in professional settings that have not previously been affected by such challenges. In other words, we need to move in a direction where not only high-profile figures, but also less prominent professionals are expected to act online as part of their job-related function. The work-private life equation has thus increasingly become a matter of tension between private interests and one’s public function at work, and the imposed/self-imposed professional use of one’s online presence will eventually also affect the more traditional work-private life interface. Professional use is not only encroaching on (expected private) off-duty time, but these activities are also enacted publicly online, thus changing the composition of the individual’s appearance in the public online space.

In this chapter I have argued that the particular affordances of public social technologies challenge our boundaries differently to the affordances of traditional technologies used in an organisational context. This is turn broadens the scope of our boundary work from being purely offline to also including online boundary work. These different forms of boundary work become important when we try to negotiate the newly challenged boundaries between private and public.
9. Conclusion

In this dissertation two streams of research have been linked, in order to gain a better understanding of the changes that are occurring in our working lives as a result of the fast-paced evolution of social technologies. Boundary work literature has been included previously in research focusing on technological effects on working life, but not with an affordance perspective on social technologies.

Barley et al. (2011) and Duxbury et al. (2013) connect boundary theory and a more socio-material approach to technology. Firstly, they focus on technologies provided and sanctioned by the employer, and secondly, they arrive at fairly homogeneous narratives of how people relate to and experience this technology. Mazmanian (2013) is one of the first to suggest the development of heterogeneous practices within the same organisation despite homogeneous frames of reference, and although a step forward, it does not explain how people experience and address expectations related to fundamentally personal technologies used for work. It is one thing to be asked by your employer to be more available through technologies provided, and then it is another to use technologies that are inherently more personal in nature alongside one’s personal social capital.

Three conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the affordances of social technologies, namely visibility, persistence and association, fundamentally challenge our boundaries in different ways than more traditional technologies have done to date. By making the individual more available online, more visible and more exposed to scrutiny through the persistence of posts, tweets and messages, social technologies contribute to a decrease in autonomy (over our boundaries) and an increase in availability. This challenge to people’s work-private life boundaries, but even more so to their public-private boundaries, necessitates the development and use of offline and online boundary work tactics.

Secondly, it has been shown that activities on social media platforms are very different in nature. Three work-related categories of posts on Facebook (supported by the pattern of tweets on Twitter) have been identified, namely employer-sanctioned, employee-instigated and organisational culture posts. From these categories, and with the use of segmentation/integration and the individual/organisation continua, four different online boundary work tactics can be distinguished, i.e. open, closed, personal or professional. These choices
can, to a certain degree, change over time according to changing personal and professional conditions.

Thirdly, attention – academically and practically – has shifted from the boundaries between work and private life to also include concerns about the boundaries between the public and the private. There is still a justified focus on the boundaries between work and private life, but with social technologies and an increase in public attention and scrutiny of the individual’s actions, the discussion needs to include the blurring of the boundaries between public and private.

9.1 Dancing between work and private life

The enactment of a new role in the intersection between public and private, enabled by social technologies, resembles more of a dance than a balance between work and private life through the addition of social technologies, and the individual now even dances between private and public. This act does not happen in the privacy of one’s own head or at home but in a virtual scene. The dancing between work and private life, by including and excluding either one through the use of the affordances of social technologies, is choreographed by the individual, but the rhythm is given by the environment and social technologies.

Choreography, from the Greek word “choreia” (circular dance) AND which literally means “dance-writing,” is in that sense a co-production between the individual, external and organisational expectations and the affordances of the technology. It is important to keep in mind that the choreography created by the individual to the rhythm varies significantly, as people dance very differently to the same rhythm, to the same music.

Individuals assume that there are certain moves they have to follow, but given the newness of the technologies they are not fixed, as social norms are not yet fully established. People improvise boundaries and continuously rewrite the choreography of social technologies at work.

The affordances of social technologies are opportunities for action, not just threats to one’s personal boundaries. They allow one to modulate the boundaries between not only work and private life, but also between public and private. We might be more visible online, our actions might be more persistent and our associations clearer, but these new instruments can also assist in making the dance between work and private life smoother. Through this dance the individual enacts the boundaries between work and private life.

Affordances of social technologies facilitate transitions and interactions across socio-cultural spaces and facilitate boundary crossing. As affordances are always perceived by the individual, they can also change over time. Ini-
tially perceived affordances and the environment modulate consecutively perceived affordances, so it is entirely possible that changes in behaviour or the environment will change the rhythm to which the individual moves between work and private life.

If one imagines a person dancing, there will be moments when they are close to work and turning together. Sometimes the individual is swirling around both, and sometimes the individual is dancing to the rhythm of the music but without getting close to either work or private life. Following this metaphor, those individuals dancing between work and private life and social technologies with their particular affordances are adding a new rhythm to the music. The individual does not stop dancing or falling over their own feet – they simply adjust their movements. At times work will demand more attention and at times private life will take over and lead the tango.

Work is changing, but it is not just the technology that is contributing to this change. There are other changing forces, especially globalisation and commercialisation, that influence how we work, when, where and with what means. The choreography that is written has many co-creators.

9.2 Theoretical and methodological implications

This dissertation contributes to existing theory in two ways. Firstly, by answering the two guiding research questions, it fills a gap in the intersection between the boundary work and affordance perspective literature. Secondly, it contributes to method development in the area of new technologies.

The first contribution derives from filling the gap in studying the relationship between boundary work and social technologies from an affordance perspective. The results of this dissertation help to establish that it is neither technological affordances nor the individual’s need for segmentation regarding integration alone that determines how boundary work is conducted and how permeable or strong boundaries are in reality.

In Chapters 7 and 8 it is also suggested that the particular affordances of social technologies described by Treem and Leonardi (2012) are not all equally relevant for public social technologies. These affordances could vary because of the kind of social technologies (public or inter-organisational) or because of the empirical context. All studies reviewed by Treem and Leonardi (2012) were carried out in companies (with the vast majority of studies done at IBM), whereas the present study was conducted with NGOs. As argued in 8.1, the more likely explanation is that inter-organisational social technologies do not challenge the public/private boundary but instead encourage the individual to consider their reputation and advancement to a greater extent. This is not a
factor for public social technologies which would render “editability” as a relatively obsolete affordance.

The online observations made for this dissertation are a way to address the second contribution. Online ethnographies have been done before, but often they have been covert rather than overt. The present dissertation offers the longitudinal observations of individuals to categories their posting behaviour. We know that people are using social technologies, but except for our personal networks we do not know much about what they share, the frequency and the relation between personal online social networks and work. This dissertation is a first attempt at learning more about this subject in detail and a suggestion for how research in this area could be done. Its success depends largely not only on the willingness of individuals to participate and to give the researcher access, but also on the researcher’s willingness to give up their own privacy and to use their personal profiles.

9.3 Practical implications

Boundary theory literature suggests that individuals have different needs for segmentation and integration between the realms of work and private life. It is furthermore suggested that these needs can change within reasonable limits, meaning that a very strict segmentor does not turn into a die-hard integrator; rather, every individual has some leeway to segment or integrate more or less at certain times in life.

Similarly to individuals, different organisations want either more or less of their employees at work. Some organisations want exclusively the professional identity of an individual (doctors and lawyers might be good examples) while others want the whole human being (care professions especially experience a more all-encompassing demand on their people in terms of knowledge, skills and emotions). It is therefore not necessarily surprising that organisations with limited resources, a state with which many NGOs are familiar, are dependent on their employees giving more than they would ordinarily be expected to give. With ubiquitous social technologies it might not be surprising that the demands of the organisation exceed a mere stretch of time and space boundaries but encompass the use of the social capital of the employee that is represented on online platforms.

This extension of the organisation’s reach can have advantages and disadvantages for all involved parties. The individual gains professional acknowledgement, appreciation and potentially success by using their personal resources, but they lose at the same time the ability to disconnect and withdraw fully from work for shorter periods of time. If things at work cause trouble or worry, the individual has potentially lost that personal space into which they
can escape from work, colleagues and bosses.

The organisation gains from the individual using personal resources by increasing its reach, gaining legitimacy (as discussed in Chapter 6) and increased authenticity. No organisation could accomplish anywhere near the spread of information and the building of legitimacy with their one official Facebook page that the collective effort of any number of employees accomplishes with their many individual profiles, as long as the individual does not – by accident or intentionally – post anything that may damage her employer’s reputation. The individual also gives more time and energy to the organisation, potentially without realising it. It can be a slow and covert experience, a bit like boiling the proverbial frog.

There are three main risks associated with very permeable social technology boundaries. Firstly, the individual could, by accident or even intentionally, post something that could damage the organisation’s reputation. Secondly, the individual could leave the organisation and take their network with them – if, for example, a lot of lobbying is done using Facebook, these contacts and entrance points will be lost. And finally, psychological studies provide evidence that detachment from work is quite important for employee health (Kanwar et al., 2009; Park et al., 2011). Therefore, an always “on” relationship with work might have far more detrimental effects in the long run than advantages in the short run.

There are two solutions that an organisation could apply in regard to using social technologies for work. The first one would be an organisation-wide social media policy. As with almost all rules, regulations and policies, there most likely will not be one solution that fits all organisations or even all employees within the same organisation, so the goal should be to find a solution that works for as many people as possible and does as little harm as possible.

One of the main advantages with a clear social media policy is the possibility for all employees to relate to something, to adjust to and benchmark their own need for segmentation and integration in relation to the clearly communicated needs of the organisation. If you know what is expected of you, you can make an informed decision as to whether or not you want it, and you can try to influence and potentially renegotiate over time. One of the troubles with subtle expectations and social pressure is that it can be difficult to point out the exact nature of a problem. A policy in this regard would not automatically solve all problems, but it would be a good start for continued conversations about what kind of workplace an organisation wants to be.

The second component of the organisation’s responsibility to address the use of social technologies for work would be the education and continuous involvement of managers in how to use technologies in general and social technologies in particular to create a good working environment. There will
always be workaholics, but the goal should be to address the needs of the vast majority of employees. Managers need to gain a better understanding of the consequences of their actions. What signal does it send to their employees if they send emails way past office hours or post work-related matters on Twitter and Facebook around the clock? Does that subtly communicate ‘I expect my employees to do the same?’ or ‘I am so overworked that I can’t get everything done between 8 and 6’? Or maybe it does not mean any of this, but from the observer’s perspective (which most employees would have in this situation) it could be interpreted in the most unfortunate of ways. The key is to be aware that social technologies – by default – not only eliminate privacy and boundaries between work and private life, but also, more importantly, between public and private, which puts greater pressure on the individual to reflect on the consequences of their actions for other people.

9.4 Future research

Given the relative newness and the widespread adoption of social technologies in many parts of the world (albeit in different forms; for example, Russia and China have their own, more common versions of Facebook), there are myriad research opportunities to increase our understanding and to meet changes in a more informed way.

An obvious choice for future research would be the quantitative testing of the suggested online boundary work behaviours, preferably in some form of comparative study with different professions and industries, as it has become clear that the social and potentially even economic (limited resources? New public management?) environments have a clear influence on the adoption and use of social technologies for working purposes. Even general personality traits could be included.

A second suggestion would be a comparative study that includes different professions and industries in regard to their online posting behaviour. We know that some professions either forbid or severely limit any kind of online sharing of work-related matters, but the opposite could also exist whereby members of organisations are encouraged to share as much as possible and to spread the word. One could also consider organisations where the professionals see themselves more as free agents with a very limited degree of organisational loyalty but a very strong developed sense of professional loyalty, all of which might compel them to post a lot of work-related things without necessarily including or considering the organisation.

A third exciting area for research would be a study that focuses more clearly on the question of how the use of social technologies for work changes our understanding of work, how it might change our sense of space and time.
and what can be considered free and paid-for labour. This is closely connected to the question of how the increasing marketisation of society fits with the use of personal contacts for work-related purposes.

9.5 Reflections on using one’s personal social technology accounts for research

Concluding, I will reflect on the use of my personal social technology profiles for research purposes. The research started before the first interview, as I Googled my participants to see if they used the most common social technologies and if their profiles were open or not. This implies that I had already exposed my private profiles on these platforms, as some show that people have looked at your profile.

After the interview I went back to the different services and started to follow, connect with or link to each participant. After the first interview my profiles stopped being my profiles and instead became public. During the duration of the study I did post things about my work, my progress and my own struggles with boundaries. Not surprisingly, my participants reacted to some of these posts. When, for instance, I posed a comment about someone contacting me on the weekend regarding a work-related matter, and two of the people commented that I should reclaim the weekend, it did give an insight into what their thoughts were on the relationship between work and private life.

Before I sent any request I went through my profiles and tidied them up. I deleted anything that could be perceived as offensive by people devoting their lives to making the world a better place. It is not that all of a sudden there would be a clean and friction-free profile (in fact, very few things were deleted) but I did not want to offend anyone.

After the first participant accepted my request I realised I needed to pay more attention to what I was posting and to what other connections might link me to in return. Again, I am not exactly a drunk hooligan, but even enjoying driving a car could be perceived as offensive by people fighting climate change. After two years of following and interacting with some of my participants online I felt more relaxed, but I would still avoid commenting on the perks of driving a car. My participants changed my perspective on things as well. Observing their devotion and passion did alter some aspects of my behaviour.

The past two-and-a-half years have also fundamentally changed my understanding of boundaries. All of these platforms were personal before – I would use them in my free time for things I was personally interested in – but slowly and surely they have become work. Facebook presents me with posts by my participants that are highly interesting for my research, and it therefore brings...
work into my mind outside of office hours. One could argue that work is always on your mind as an academic, and to a certain degree this notion might be true. The difference is that in other moments, when work comes to my mind, I do not feel the need to interrupt what I am doing to take a screenshot of something I see on my screen or to take a note of something I have observed. Work has entered in a demanding and behaviour-changing way. This is not to say it is negative or positive; it is merely an observation of the changes that this research has brought upon me on a personal level.

Finally, by researching questions surrounding boundaries, and observing and interviewing people who all find their own more or less successful ways of dealing with competing demands, I now pay more attention to my own and other people’s boundaries. I question and evaluate my boundary-setting strategies and I ask literally everyone around me about their boundaries between work and private life. Relating back to work entering my private time through social technologies, these conversations are different. They are work-related but I choose them and I do not feel the need to sit down the next minute and take notes.

This connection with some of my participants, which at times has been quite intimate, has been very rewarding but it has also been quite challenging by eliminating some of my carefully crafted boundaries. Privacy is quite literally dead.
Sammanfattning

Sociala teknologier har fått en allt större roll i vår vardag. Eftersom teknologier i en eller annan form infiltrerar alla områden i livet skapar det naturligtvis konsekvenser för individer och organisationer.

Plattformar som Facebook eller Twitter skapar platser för nya typer av aktiviteter. Förut visade kollegor inte varandra varenda barnbild, delade artiklar om politiskt engagemang på sin fritid eller berättade för varandra om den senaste tunnelbanan på morgonen. Facebook, Twitter och LinkedIn ger tillgång till information människor inte hade om varandra förut. Dessa plattformar gör det möjligt att gränser suddas ut och korsas, de tillåter sammanväxande av olika områden i livet. Konceptet gränsarbete gör det möjligt att undersöka hur människor hanterar de utmaningar som uppståd då de använder av sociala teknologier för delvis arbets- och delvis privat bruk.

Två forskningsfrågor studeras utifrån en kvalitativ studiedesign med intervjuer och online observationer på Facebook och Twitter. Hur påverkar sociala teknologiers särskilda tillhandahållande (affordances) att gränserna mellan arbete och privatliv suddas ut? Den andra frågan jag undersöker är hur anställda i idéburna organisationer (NGOs) skapar gränserna mellan arbete och privatliv med och trots sociala teknologier.

Analysen visar att sociala teknologier tillhandahåller synlighet (visibility), permanens (permeability) och associering (association) och genom detta ökar gräns genomtränglighet (boundary permeability) och gräns blandning (boundary blending). Teorin om gränsarbete utvecklas ytterligare genom att påvisa en skillnad mellan offline- och online-gränsarbete. Med sociala teknologier ständigt närvarande är det inte tillräcklig att bara använda offline-gränsarbete utan individer utvecklar en mängd olika taktiker som kan klassas som online-gränsarbete. Resultaten tyder på att de anställdas utmaningar inte endast är begränsade till gränserna mellan arbete och privatliv utan sociala teknologier utmanar även avgränsningar mellan det offentliga och privata. Till följd av denna skillnad, visar denna studie att en mängd olika online representationer finns och organisationer skulle vinna på att förstå skillnader för att bättre hantera de förändrade villkoren.
References


Doctoral Theses

Stockholm Business School
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>192</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Caihong Xu</td>
<td>Essays on Derivatives and Liquidity. Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Mikael Andéhn</td>
<td>Place-of-Origin Effects on Brand Equity. Explicating the evaluative pertinence of product categories and association strength. Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Sabina Du Rietz</td>
<td>Accounting in the field of governance. Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Kumar, Nishant</td>
<td>Globalisation and Competitive Sustenance of Born Global. Evidence from Indian knowledge-intensive service industry. Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Lund, Ragnar</td>
<td>Leveraging cooperative strategy – cases of sports and arts sponsorship. Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
179 2010  Svendsen, Jens Martin  

**Gör som jag säger! igen och igen – om lojalitet och lek i marknadsföringen: en beskrivning av legitimeringssystematik.** Stockholm University School of Business.

178 2010  Hansson, Jörgen  

**Köp av tjänster för ledningskompetens – en polyfonisk process.** Stockholm University School of Business.

177 2010  Ljungbo, Kjell  

**Language as a Leading Light to Business Cultural Insight. A Study on Expatriates’ Intercultural Communication in Central and Eastern Europe.** Stockholm University School of Business.

176 2010  Demir, Robert  


175 2010  Radón, Anita  

**The Rise of Luxury Brands Online: A study of how a sense of luxury brand is created in an online environment.** Stockholm University School of Business.

174 2010  Martinsson, Irene  

**Standardized Knowledge Transfer: A study of Project-Based Organizations in the Construction and IT Sectors.** Stockholm University School of Business.

173 2009  Digerfeldt-Månsson, Theresa  

**Formernas liv i designföretaget - om design och design management som konst.** Stockholm University School of Business.

172 2009  Larsson Segerlind, Tommy  

**Team Entrepreneurship – A Process Analysis of the Venture Team and the Venture Team Roles in relation to the Innovation Process.** Stockholm University School of Business.

171 2009  Svensson, Jenny  

**The Regulation of Rule - Following. Imitation and Soft Regulation in the European Union.** Stockholm University School of Business.

170 2009  Wittbom, Eva  

**Att spränga normer - om målstyrningsprocesser för jämställdhetsintegrering.** Stockholm University School of Business.

169 2009  Wiesel, Fredrika  

**Kundorientering och ekonomistyrning i offentlig sektor.** Stockholm University School of Business.
168 2008  Essén, Anna  Technology as an Extension of the Human Body: Exploring the potential role of technology in an elderly home care setting. Stockholm University School of Business.


166 2008  Gustafsson, Clara  Brand Trust: Corporate communications and consumer-brand relationships. Stockholm University School of Business.

165 2008  Jansson, Elisabeth  Paradoxen (s)om entreprenörskap: En romantisk ironisk historia om ett av-vikande entreprenörskapande. Stockholm University School of Business.

164 2008  Jüriado, Rein  Learning within and between public-private partnerships. Stockholm University School of Business.


161 2007  Carrington, Thomas  Framing Audit Failure - Four studies on quality discomforts. Stockholm University School of Business.


159 2007  Gawell, Malin  Activist Entrepreneurship - Attac’ing Norms and Articulating Disclosive Stories. Stockholm University School of Business.


<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Ferdfelt, Henrik</td>
<td><em>Pop.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Sjödin, Ulrika</td>
<td><em>Insiders’ Outside/Outsiders’ Inside - rethinking the insider regulation.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Skoglund, Wilhelm</td>
<td><em>Lokala samhällsutvecklingsprocesser och entreprenörskap.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Bengtsson, Elias</td>
<td><em>Shareholder activism of Swedish institutional investors.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Holmgren, Mikael</td>
<td><em>A passage to organization.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Sjöstrand, Fredrik</td>
<td><em>Nätverkskoordineringens dualiteter.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Khan, Jahangir Hossain</td>
<td><em>Determinants of Small Enterprise Development of Bangladesh.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Almqvist, Roland</td>
<td><em>Icons of New Public Management. Four studies on competition, contract and control.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Yazdanfar, Darush</td>
<td><em>Futures som ett mångsidigt instrument. En empirisk studie av oljebolag som använder futureskontrakt.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Elmersjö, Carl-Åke</td>
<td><em>Moralisk ekonomi i sjukvården? - Om etik och ekonomi i sjukhusets vardagsorganisering.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Koponen, Anja</td>
<td><em>Företagens väg mot konkurs.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Frostling-Henningsson, Maria</td>
<td><em>Internet Grocery Shopping - A Necessity, A Pleasurable Adventure, or an Act of Love.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Köping, Ann-Sofie</td>
<td><em>Den Bundna friheten. Om kreativitet och relationer i ett konserthus.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Lindqvist, Katja</td>
<td><em>Exhibition enterprising - six cases of realisation from idea to institution.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Lundkvist, Anders</td>
<td><em>Conversational Realities - Five Studies of User Interactions as Sources of Innovation.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Roy, Sofie</td>
<td><em>Navigating in the Knowledge Era. Metaphors and Stories in the Construction of Skandia’s Navigator.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Tollhagen, Renate</td>
<td>Skräddare utan tråd - en illustration av fyra företag i klädbranschen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Torpman, Jan</td>
<td>Rättsystemets Lärande.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Dahlström, Karin</td>
<td>Värdeskapande produktutveckling i tjänsteintensiva företag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Gravesen, Inger</td>
<td>Fitnessövningar och husförhör: Om förbättringsprocesser i företag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Engström, Malin</td>
<td>Essays on Equity Options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Hansson, Bo</td>
<td>Essays on Human Capital Investments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Eklöv, Gunilla</td>
<td><em>Auditability as Interface - Negotiation and Signification of Intangibles.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Lennstrand, Bo</td>
<td><em>HYPE IT - IT as Vision and Reality - on Diffusion, Personalization and Broadband.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Wetterström, Jeanette</td>
<td><em>Stor opera - små pengar.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Friman, Henrik</td>
<td><em>Strategic Time Awareness - Implications of Strategic Thinking.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Apéria, Tony</td>
<td><em>Brand Relationship Management: den varumärkesbyggande processen.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Johansson, Stig G</td>
<td><em>Individens roll i strategiska informationssystem.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Carlell, Camilla</td>
<td><em>Technology in Everyday Life - A study of Consumers and Technology in a Banking Context.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Hamde, Kiflemariam</td>
<td><em>Shifting Identities: Teamwork and Supervisors in Swedish Change Programmes for the Last Three Decades.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Rämö, Hans</td>
<td><em>The Nexus of Time and Place in Economical Operations.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Berglund, Åke Blomquist, Anders</td>
<td><em>Från affärskompetens till affärsutveckling i småföretag.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Näsman, Birgitta</td>
<td><em>Pappas flickor. Entreprenöriella processer i kvinnoföretagandets tillkomst.</em> Stockholm University School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Lundgren, Maths</td>
<td><em>Bankens natur - miljöfrågans genomslag i svenska banker.</em> Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Bay, Thomas</td>
<td>...AND...AND...AND - Reiterating Financial Derivation. Stockholm University, School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Malver, Henrik</td>
<td>Service in the Airlines - Customer or Competition Oriented? Stockholm University, School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Wallin Andreassen, Tor</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction with Services - The Impact of Satisfaction with Service Recovery on Corporate Image and Future Repurchase Intention. Stockholm University, School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Le Duc, Michaël</td>
<td>Constructivist Systemics - Theoretical Elements and Applications in Environmental Informatics. Stockholm University, School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Preiholt, Håkan</td>
<td>The Organization of Manufacturing Know-How. Stockholm University, School of Business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Green, Bo</td>
<td>Analys av komplexa samhällssystem - Aktionsinriktade fallstudier och metodologiska konklusioner. Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hedlin, Pontus

Accounting Investigations. Stockholm University, School of Business.

Yakhlef, Ali

Organizing as Discursive Practices: The Example of Information Technology Outsourcing. Stockholm University, School of Business.

Wahlgren, Ingela

Vem tröstar Ruth? Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

Rutihinda, Cranmer

Resource-based internationalization: Entry Strategies of Swedish Firms into the Emerging Markets of Eastern Europe Stockholm University, School of Business.

Liljefors, Ole

Efterfrågan och utbud av kompetensutvecklande ledningsarbete. Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

Asproth, Viveca

Visualization of Dynamic Information. Stockholm University, School of Business.

Håkansson, Anita

Models and Methods for the Management of Dynamic Information in GEOinformatic Systems. Stockholm University, School of Business.

Khodabandehloo, Akbar


Rylander, Leif

Tillväxtföretag i startfas. Från dimma och mörker till relationslyft. Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

Malmström, Li


Brunson, Karin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Towards a knowledge perspective on organisation.</td>
<td>Sveiby, Karl-Erik</td>
<td>Stockholm University, School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Belöningar och prestationer i offentlig verksamhet - En utvärdering</td>
<td>Bergqvist, Erik</td>
<td>av fyra fall inom Stockholms läns landsting. Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>A Female Cooperative Perspective on Power Influence and Ownership.</td>
<td>Bergström, Cecilia</td>
<td>Stockholm University, School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Determinants or Entrepreneurial Processes. A Case Study of Technology-Based Spin-off Company Formations.</td>
<td>Tesfaye, Besrat</td>
<td>Stockholm University, School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Strategisk ekonomistyrning i tidningsföretag - Aktionsforskning i</td>
<td>Sigfridsson, Jan</td>
<td>ekonomisk ledningsinformation. Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Improving Food Product Distribution in Developing Countries: A Case Study of Nigeria.</td>
<td>Osarenkhoe, Aihie</td>
<td>Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Media Technology and Communication Patterns in the Organizational Interface.</td>
<td>Pihljamäki, Klara</td>
<td>Stockholm University, School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Man without Knowledge - Actors and Spectators in Organizations.</td>
<td>Sotto, Richard</td>
<td>Stockholm University, School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>The Economics of Money and Banking - a Theoretical and Empirical Study of Islamic Interest-Free Banking.</td>
<td>Zineldin, Mosad</td>
<td>Stockholm University, School of Business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
50 1990   Tollin, Karin  
Konsumentbilder i marknadsföringen av livsmedel - en studie om marknadsföringens kontext inom svensk lantbrukskooperativ livsmedelsindustri. Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

49 1990  Wagué, Cheick  
Enterpreneurship and industrial policy in developing countries. A case study of principal policy constraints which limit the development and expansion of private sector industrial enterprises in Mali. Stockholm University, School of Business.

48 1989   Eriksson, Gunilla  
Framtidsinriktade aktörs perspektiv på branscher - metodsynpunkter med utgångspunkt från en studie i svensk dagligvaruindustri. Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

47 1989   Winai, Peter  

46 1989   Åredal, Åke  

45 1989   Kaiser, Bo  

44 1988   Scheutz, Curt  

43 1988   Eriksson, Lars Torsten  
Myndigheters marknadsorientering. Om marknadsföringsfrågor i avgiftsfinansierade statliga myndigheter. Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Barius, Bengt</td>
<td>Investeringar och marknadskonsekvenser. En empirisk undersökning av</td>
<td>Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>investeringsärenden och särskilt av möjligheter att bedöma investeringars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>framtida marknadskonsekvenser.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Garnisonen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Öhrming, Jan</td>
<td>Förvaltning av flerbostadshus. Om arbetsorganisation och föreställningar</td>
<td>Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>som villkor för samspel och boendemedverkan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Kostopoulos, Trifon</td>
<td>The Decline of the Market: the ruin of capitalism and anti-</td>
<td>Stockholm University, School of Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>capitalism.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the British and the Swedish primary markets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>empirisk undersökning av ett antal svenska industriföretags produktionsinvesteringar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Onwuchekwa, Christian Ike</td>
<td>Agricultural Cooperatives and Problems of Transition. A study of</td>
<td>University of Stockholm, Department of Business Administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>organizational development problems in rural development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Hilding, Madeleine</td>
<td>Arbetsstrivsel och psykisk påfrestning. En studie av arbetsmiljö i</td>
<td>Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>samband med omlokalisering av statlig verksamhet.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16

33 1985 Valdemarsson, Bengt  
_Förväntningar inför arbetslivet. En longitudinell studie hos några ungdomar av förväntningars uppkomst och deras betydelse för inställningen till arbetslivet i industriföretag._ Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

32 1985 Badran, Mohga  
_Coordination In Multiactor Programs: An Empirical Investigation of Factors Affecting Coordination among Organizations at the Local Level in the Egyptian Family Planning Program._ University of Stockholm, Department of Business Administration.

31 1984 Myrsten, Karl  
_Lönsam samverkan. En studie av utvecklingsprocesser inom området fastighetsreparation._ Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

30 1981 Abdel-Khalik, Ali  
_The Production and Distribution of Milk and Dairy Products in Egypt: towards a Co-operative System._ University of Stockholm, Department of Business Administration.

29 1981 Hedvall, Maria  
_Participation i företag. En jämförelse mellan ett jugoslaviskt och ett svenskt tobaksföretag._ Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

28 1980 Vavrin, Jeanette  
_The Airline Insurance Industry. A future study._ University of Stockholm, Department of Business Administration.

27 1980 Håkansson, Stefan  
_Kostnadsvariationer inom sjukvården - jämförande studier på landstings- och kliniknivå._ Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

26 1980 Bergström, Erik  
_Projektorienterad marknadsföring. En studie av fem försäljningar av komplexa anläggningar._ Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

25 1980 Edsbäcker, Göran  
_Marginal Cost Pricing of Electricity._ University of Stockholm, Department of Business Administration.

24 1980 Högborg, Olle  
_Föreställningar och spelregler i kommunal planering._ Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.
23 1980  Klingberg, Tage  

22 1978  Lindgren, Christer  

21 1978  Granqvist, Roland  
Studier i sjukvårdsekonomi. Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

20 1978  Gröjer, Jan-Erik  
Stark, Agneta  
Social redovisning. Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

19 1978  Khan, Sikander  
A Study of Success and Failure in Exports. An empirical investigation of the export performance of 165 market ventures of 83 firms in the chemical and electronics manufacturing industries. University of Stockholm, Department of Business Administration.

18 1977  Mills, Peter  
New Perspectives on Post-Industrial Organizations. An empirical investigation into the theories and practices of service firms. University of Stockholm, Department of Business Administration.

17 1977  Bergström, Sören  

16 1977  Gummesson, Evert  
Marknadsföring och inköp av konsulttjänster. En studie av egenskaper och beteenden i producenttjänstmarknader. Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen.

15 1977  Hansson, Roland  
<p>|    |    |    | Datum | Namn, Namn  | Titel och Institution |
|----|----|----|--------|----------------------|
| 12 | 1975 | Söderman, Sten | Industrial Location Planning. An empirical investigation of company approaches to the problem of locating new plants. University of Stockholm, Department of Business Administration. |
| 8  | 1973 | Rundfelt, Rolf | Reklamens kostnader och bestämningsfaktorer. Stockholms universitet, Företagsekonomiska institutionen. |
| 7  | 1973 | Leonardz, Björn | To Stop or Not to Stop, Some Elementary Optimal Stopping Problems with Economic Interpretations. University of Stockholm, Department of Business Administration. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Bergendahl, Göran</td>
<td>Models for investments in a road network.</td>
<td>University of Stockholm, Department of Business Administration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>