

# Human Resource and Diversity Management

## Managing working conditions



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# SESSION PLAN

- I. Introduction
- II. What are we talking about?
- III. The stakeholders of working conditions
- IV. Risks and physical constraints
- V. Psychosocial Risks (PSR)
- VI. From unease to crisis
- VII. Towards an improvement of the Quality of Working Life (QWL)?

# I. Introduction



# SOME PHILOSOPHICAL, LITERARY & CINEMATOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times* (1936)

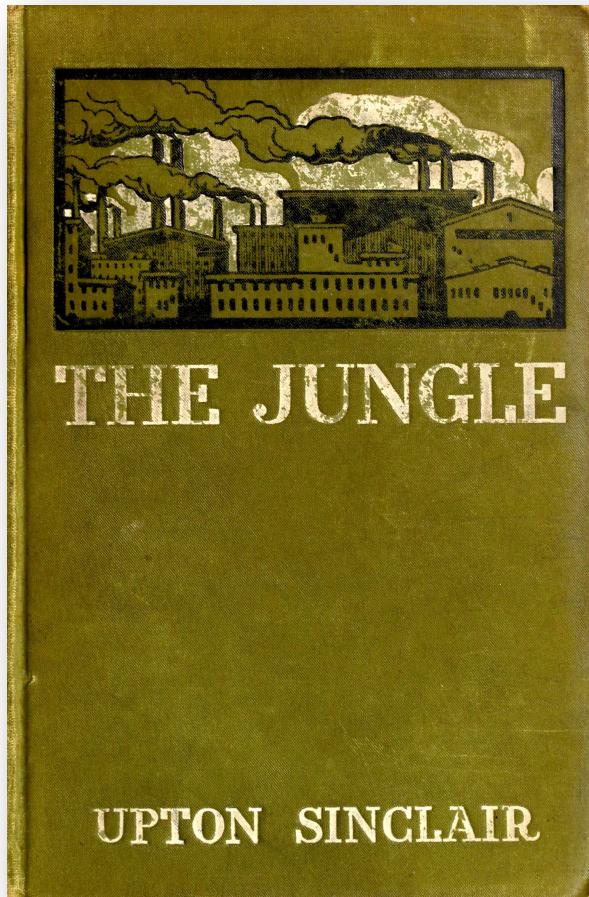


- Simone Weil, *The working class condition* (1951)



# SOME PHILOSOPHICAL, LITERARY & CINEMATOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1905)



265 Splitting backbones and final inspection — hogs ready for cooler, Swift & Co., Chicago, U.S.A. Copyright 1908 by H. O. White Co.

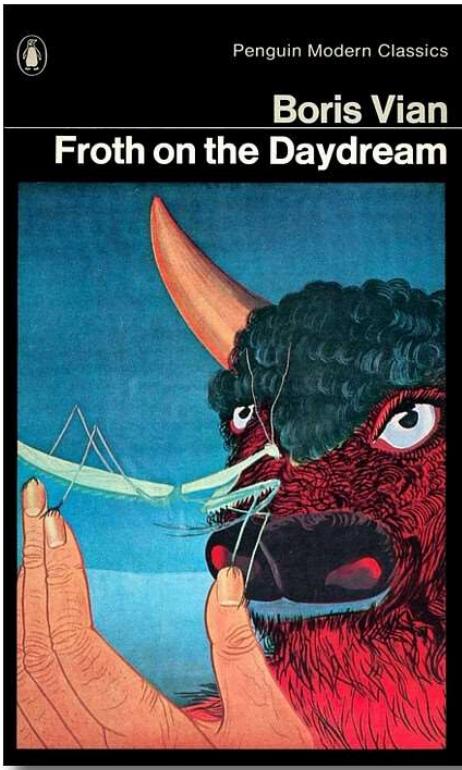
# SOME PHILOSOPHICAL, LITERARY & CINEMATOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1905)

“Worst of any, however, were the fertilizer men, and those who served in the cooking rooms. These people could not be shown to the visitor, for the odor of a fertilizer man would scare any ordinary visitor at a hundred yards, and as for the other men, who worked in tank rooms full of steam, and in some of which there were open vats near the level of the floor, **their peculiar trouble was that they fell into the vats**; and when they were fished out, there was never enough of them left to be worth exhibiting, **sometimes they would be overlooked for days**, till all but the bones of them had gone out to the world as Durham's Pure Leaf Lard!” (Chapter 9)

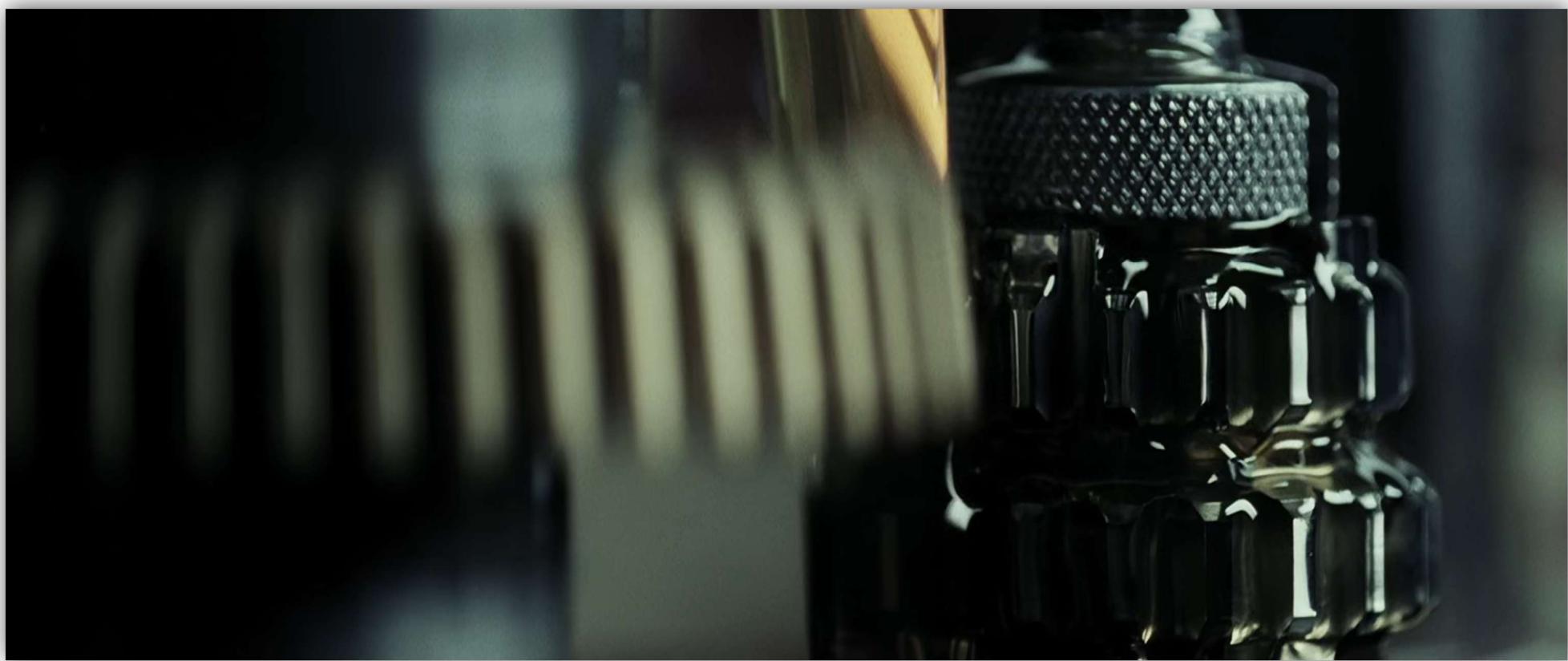
# SOME PHILOSOPHICAL, LITERARY & CINEMATOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- Boris Vian, *Froth on the Daydream* (1947)



# SOME PHILOSOPHICAL, LITERARY & CINEMATOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- Brad Anderson, *The Machinist* (2004)

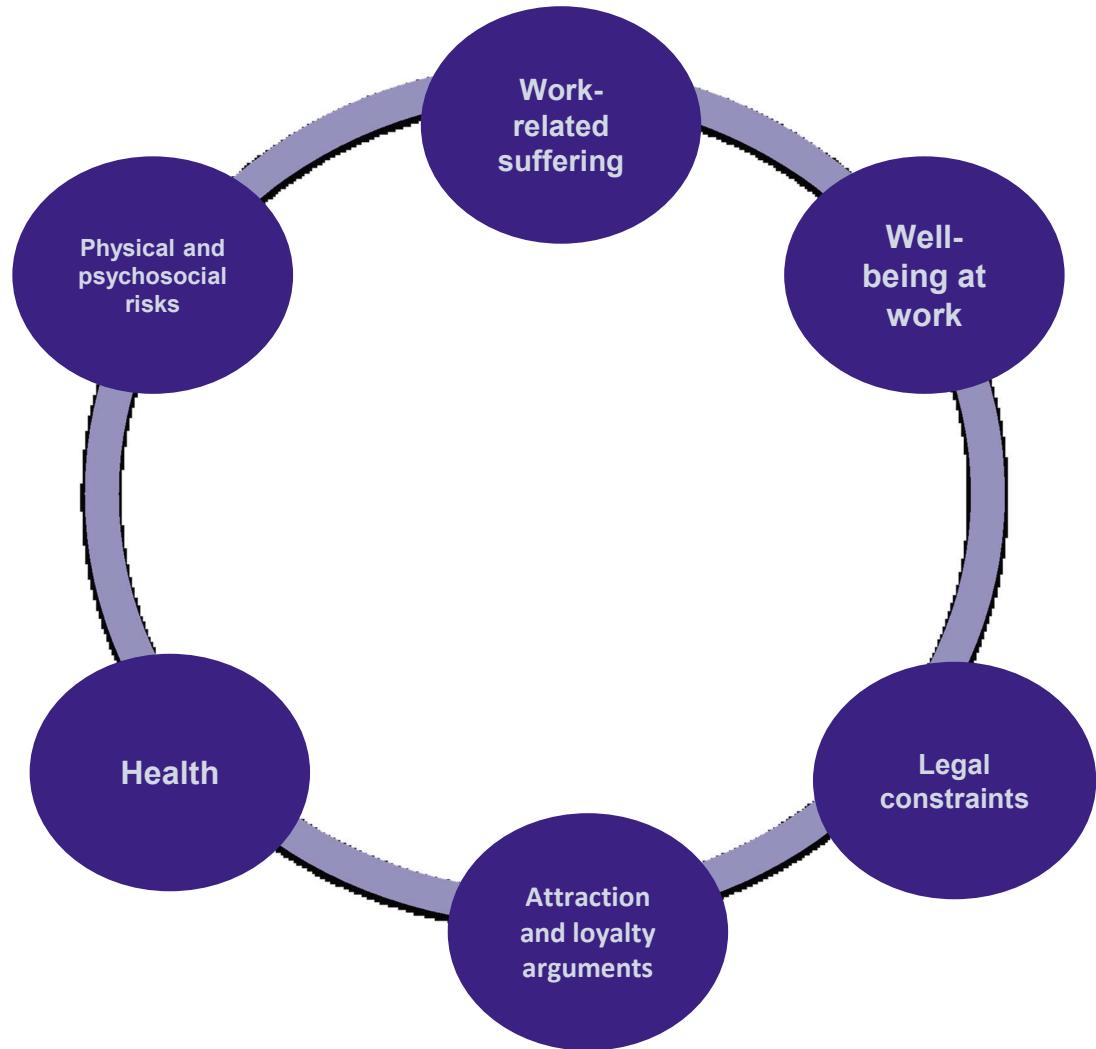


## II. What are we talking about?



# WHAT DOES THE TERM “WORKING CONDITIONS” COVER?

This refers to “all the physical, psychological and organizational factors resulting from the exercise of the employee's missions at his workstation.”  
(Benchemam & Galindo, 2015, p. 143)



# THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING CONDITIONS: LEGAL CONSTRAINTS

- “The employer shall take the necessary measures to ensure the safety and protect the physical and mental health of workers.”  
(art. L. 4121-1, Labour Code)



Lewis Hine (1931)  
Construction of the Empire State Building

# THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING CONDITIONS: LEGAL CONSTRAINTS

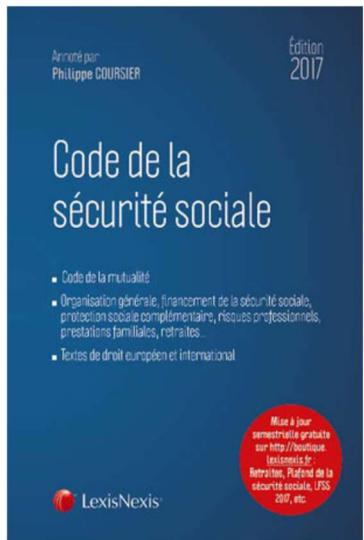
- Since 2002, the employer has been subject to an obligation of result in terms of safety, whose failure has the character of an inexcusable fault.
- Since 2015, there has been a move towards an obligation of reinforced means.

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and does not consist only in the absence of disease or infirmity.” (WHO, 1946)



World Health Organization

# WORKPLACE ACCIDENTS



"An accident at work is considered to be an accident, regardless of the cause, when it occurs as a result of or during the work of any person employed or working in any capacity or in any place whatsoever for one or more employers or company managers." (Social Security Code, art. L. 1421-1)

An accidental event that can be precisely dated and that causes physical or mental injury.



The existence of a relationship of subordination between the victim and his employer at the time of the accident.

# OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES

- No general legal definition of an occupational disease.
- Consequence of the more or less prolonged exposure to a risk during the exercise of a professional activity.
- Compensable occupational diseases listed in specific tables (MSD, cancers related to asbestos exposure, etc.)



### III. The stakeholders of working conditions



# MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

Everyone around the table



# THE CHIEF HAPPINESS OFFICER (CHO)



# THE CHIEF HAPPINESS OFFICER (CHO)



# THE CHIEF HAPPINESS OFFICER (CHO)



**Debate: For or Against the Chief Happiness Officer (CHO)?**

# THE CHIEF HAPPINESS OFFICER (CHO)

“The concept of happiness is such an indeterminate concept that, although every human being wishes to attain this, he can still never say determinately and consistently with himself what he really wishes and wills.”

Immanuel Kant  
*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785)



# IV. Risks and physical constraints



# PHYSICAL RISKS

## Environmental factors

- Noise
- Lighting
- Temperature
- Workspace

## Postures & gestures

- Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD)

**Because work shouldn't hurt...**

### Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD)

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) represent the most common type of work-related disease in Europe. A musculoskeletal disorder is a painful affliction of the muscles, tendons, skeleton and nerves. It is usually caused by tasks that lead to stress or strain and is caused by work-related MSDs can be made worse by specific circumstances, such as work organisation and intensification or working time.

Factors that can  
**MAKE THINGS WORSE**

- Work organisation
- Work intensification
- Working time

**EU legislation gives you  
a right to risk  
assessment**

**talk  
to your  
safety  
representative**



### Main MSD causes



Source: European Working Conditions Survey 2017,  
European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions  
\* % of respondents reporting the given factor as cause for MSD

**SYNDICAT  
EUROPEEN  
TRADE UNION**

**etui.**

# SOLUTIONS

- Changes in work organisation (ergonomists, organisers, methods unit, employee suggestions...)
  - Autonomy
  - Flexibility, job rotation
  - Enrichment of work and tasks
- Development of **ergonomics**: “knowledge to adapt work to people”
  - Workstation modifications
  - Improvements in gestures and postures
  - **Training** of employees in the right gestures and postures



# THE WORKSPACE LAYOUT

“The first thing you see from an organization where you don’t belong is a **store front** set up by often professional decorators.”

(Michel Matheu, 1986, p. 84)

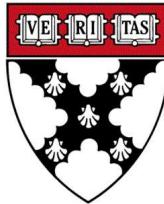


# THE WORKSPACE LAYOUT

- Tom Haverford in *Parks and Recreation* (2009-2015)



# BE CAREFUL OF COSMETIC MEASURES



**Harvard  
Business  
Review**



Patrice de Fournas



# V. Psychosocial Risks (PSR)



# FACTORS BEHIND PSR

- The deterioration of social relations
- The loss of autonomy
- The emotional demand
  - Ex: health professions, teaching, public service...*
- The gaps between prescribed, real and lived work
- The psychological and mental workload
- The loss of meaning



# FACTORS BEHIND PSR

- Conflicts of values
- Moral harassment
- Organizational restructurings
  - Ex: mergers and acquisitions...*
- The work/life balance
- New technologies: e-mail management, home connections, smartphones...
- Open spaces



# WORKPLACE STRESS

**Stress** is a physiological reaction of adaptation to situations of imbalance between the perception that a person has of the constraints imposed on him by his environment and the perception that he has of his own resources to deal with it.



# WORKPLACE STRESS

- The example of “karōshi” in Japan

Karōshi crisis: The Japanese employees who work themselves to death (France 24, 2016)



# VI. From unease to crisis



# BURN-OUT, EXHAUSTION AT WORK

- Burnout Is Now A Legitimate Diagnosis: Here Are The Symptoms And How To Treat It (NBC News, 2019)



# BURN-OUT, EXHAUSTION AT WORK

“Burn-out is a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion characterized by feelings of powerlessness, emptiness, and a negative perception of self and others.”  
*(Benchemam, F. & Galindo, G., 2015, p. 156)*



## VII. Towards an improvement of the Quality of Working Life (QWL)?



# WHAT IS QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE (QWL) ?

- Quality of social and labor relations
- Quality of work content
- Quality of the physical working environment
- Quality of work organization
- Possibility of personal achievement and professional development
- Work-life balance



**Objective:** to increase overall performance

# CONCLUSION

## ■ Key points

- Working conditions correspond to all the physical, psychological and organizational factors to which an employee may be exposed at work.
- Employees can be exposed to various risks with sometimes disastrous consequences (stress, MSD, PSR...).
- Multiple issues that oscillate between repair and prevention.
- Every manager must be aware of the dangers that certain managerial practices can create.

## ■ Managerial challenges

- Awareness and prevention of MSD and PSR
- Prevent the pitfalls of burn-out and suicide
- Develop the Quality of Working Life (QWL)



# HR COURSE ASSESSMENT

- Go to eCampus to take the Human Resource and Diversity Management course evaluation.



