5-Star (By Local Norms):
Group Dynamics in a Luxury Sub-Saharan Resort

By

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partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Science in Management Studies

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a monograph about a Sub-Saharan 5-Star resort. It is based on 22 loosely structured
ethnographic interviews, field notes, a series of artifacts and pictures, all collected during a 10-day field
trip to the given location. After describing the various workplace activities at the resort, the study focuses
on interactions between local and expatriate staff members looking specifically at the working conditions
of these two groups, the expression of local culture at the workplace, and the impact of intra-group beliefs
on the meaning of authority within the employee community.

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5-Star (By Local Norms)
Group Dynamics in a Luxury Sub-Saharan Resort

Stéphane Francioli – MSMS2014
Under the supervision of Professor John Van Maanen
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Chapter 1 - Introduction and Setting

1.A. Introduction

Between 2007 and 2014, I had the opportunity to travel frequently at Le Zéphyr Beach Resort, a Sub-Saharan 5-Star resort located in Casamance, Senegal. While my stays at the resort were primarily holiday time with my family, I have decided to take a look at Le Zéphyr with the hat of a (wanna-be) ethnographer during my last trip (in 2014).

The present study is the outcome of this endeavor: a monograph of the resort based on 22 loosely structured ethnographic interviews, field notes, a series of artifacts and pictures, all collected during a 10-day field trip at the given location. After describing the workplace activities at the resort, the study focuses on interactions between local and expatriate staff members, looking specifically at the working conditions of these two groups, the expression of local culture at the workplace, and the impact of intra-group beliefs on the meaning of authority within the employee community.

1.B. Le Zéphyr Beach Resort

Le Zéphyr Beach Resort—a pseudonym—is a privately owned 5-Star hotel located on the seashore of Casamance, a rural area in southern Senegal. Built a little bit more than a decade ago, the resort is the only one to have achieved a 5-Star standard in
the region, and one of only two in the country; it is also considered the 2nd best hotel nationally and 21st best of the continent, according to 2013’s Trip Advisor’s users.

The history of the resort starts in 1999 when Charles, a 40 years old Belgian entrepreneur, decides to sell his recruiting agency and launch a new venture in Senegal. His vision: to offer a limited number of high standing villas and lofts built according to European norms but decorated in a Sub-Saharan style. He, his wife Marine (a partner) bring in part of the capital of the project. The rest is financed via a specific business model: they sell each villa and loft to individual owners who pay charges of €1,000 per month (approximately $1,390), receive 60% of the renting revenues of their property, and may stay at the resort whenever they want without paying for the accommodation. To complement the renting business, Charles develops side activities (restaurants, a spa area, a shop, etc.) within the frame of a small luxury resort. Le Zéphyr opened in 2003, with four villas, a restaurant and a swimming pool. It then expended until 2007 to reach its current form: sixteen spacious villas and two lofts, as well as two restaurants, a swimming pool [See Picture 2], a palm grove, 200 yards of private beach, a spa area, a shop and a great deal of leisure activity equipment. Today, Charles (Director General) and Marine (Director) live at the resort in their own villa during the touristic season—from September to June. Together, they co-manage a team of 45 to 50 employees, mainly Senegalese, and welcome around 450 clients each year.

Charles and Marine have considered several extension projects for the resort—an extra villa and a number of bungalows to be built close to the sea or behind the current resort. In certain areas, the ground was flattened to accommodate a new
development. However, the economic crisis Europe faced in 2008, as well as the
deteriorating situation of tourism in Casamance in the same period [See Chapter
1.E.], pushed the management team to postpone development indefinitely. From
2010 up until the beginning of this study (January 2014), the resort has recorded
four consecutive seasons of loss (with a median loss around $45,000) and Charles is
considering lay-offs as an unfortunate but likely option going forward.

1.C. Resort’s Accommodations and Design

The accommodations are arranged along 3 rows parallel to the ocean and built on a
small hill that overlooks the beach. For owners, the domain is called Le Zéphyr
Residential Facilities and the accommodations, villas or lofts; for clients (i.e., who
rent a property), the domain is called Le Zéphyr Beach Resort and villas, suites.
Accommodations located on the row closest to the sea are named Ocean Suites
(Suites Océans), the ones on the second row Azure Suites (Suites Azur), the ones on
the last row Garden Suites (Suites Jardin) [See Picture 1 for a map of the resort].
Thirteen villas are rented to tourists by their owners; three are also available for
resale.

With an average surface area of 1,940 squared meters, villas comprise between three
and four bedrooms and bathrooms, two balconies, a living room and a kitchen area.
They also include their own terrace and garden, and are equipped with a stove, a
fridge, a kitchen sink, plates, glasses and cutlery, a television, a hi-fi system and
wireless Internet access via the resort’s network. The furniture (e.g., tables, chairs,
sofas, beds, chest of drawers, lamps), made of wood and wrought iron, is stylistically
similar to that of western design despite being mostly built locally. Other aspects of
the accommodations, however, provide an “African touch”: The shape of the building resembles that of a traditional circular hut of the Sub-Sahara region; a thick layer of straw covers the roof; a painted strip of minimalist geometrical patterns—following African motifs—ornaments the façade; in front of the villas’ entrance, two wooden hand-sculpted pillars display Senegalese frescos; mats of thin mangrove tree laths cover all the ceilings; plaited palms decorate the dressing room doors; bedrooms and corridors floors are covered with parquets of Linké (a local noble wood); bedspreads are made of Senegalese fabric; and African motifs adorns the kitchen and bathroom tiles [See Picture 2]. In addition, villa owners often decorate their property with local masks, sculptures, pictures and paintings that reinforces the image of a rich African residence in the eye of the western visitor.

The domain, enclosed and secured, is built on 3.5 hectares of land that used to serve as rice fields by the population of nearby villages. It is now covered with green spaces hosting a myriad of plants from the region: banana trees, hibiscus, baobabs, palm trees, frangipani trees, bougainvillea, papaya trees, cashew trees, etc. The plants are, however, organized in western-like gardens, covered with well-maintained grass, delimited by hedges and connected by concrete walks [See Picture 4]. The walks are boarded with external lamps of which the structure in wood mimics the silhouette of local statuettes. The park is sprinkled with large wooden Sub-Saharan sculptures, both typical and less so; on a path leading to the private beach, there is a five foot painted sculpture of Tintin in his adventurer outfit from Tintin in the Congo, a detail that may surprise a careful observer. Indeed, while the ornamental item probably reminds the two (Belgian) founders of the national classic comic they read as children, the statue also refers to a book highly criticized for its
Colonialist, not to say racist views—depicting local ethnic groups as an underdeveloped, almost non self-reliant population living in a simplistic, quasi aberrant social and political system.

Similarly, the reception desk of the resort exhibits a framed reproduction of *Tintin in the Congo* and the main restaurant displays a vintage *Banania* tray, old promotional material of a popular French chocolate drink that displays an effigy of a dubiously caricatured negroid face wearing the hat of the Senegalese infantryman from the colonialist era. Yet these decorative elements, clumsy reminders of an inglorious era, does not seem to shock the clients I interviewed on the topic; neither does it draw the attention of local employees whom, for the most part, told me they never read *Tintin in the Congo* nor heard of the Banania brand.

Despite the luxuriant green spaces and the beautiful villas of the resort, some signs may go counter to visitors’ expectations of a high-class institution: the Reception is opened only 9 hours a day; tap water is not drinkable; the restaurant uses modest stainless steel cutlery and basic kitchen glasses; power cuts occasionally; relations between staff and clients tend to be informal; shower temperature sometimes swings from hot to cold and cold to hot... one might think clients would be surprised. The resort’s management team suggests that the atmosphere of the place compensates for these minor inconveniences, as explained by Marine:

"Tourists who come to Africa have a different mentality. You don’t come to Africa to wear your jewelry for dinner, or show your bag of a luxury brand... I think it filters people already. And I believe that what clients do not find in terms of luxury is fairly compensated by the personalization, the atmosphere of community, the feeling of
proximity, the kindness of people, the availability of the hosts [...] and, something that has absolutely nothing to do with us but, a complete disconnection with the European or American environment. At first, we displayed [our 5-Star accreditation] with the mention 'NL', for Local Norms, but we dropped it. [...] When you don't know Senegal, it can be misleading. [...] I'm the first one to admit that, when I go to a 5-Star hotel in Europe, it's a much higher standing than here. But people, here... there is something magical at work. I think the five stars are to be found in the soul of the place more than the material aspect. People feel so good. It's worth any luxury! "

Le Zéphyr is part of a resort area that spreads along the coast. As such, it is in competition with a Club Med and four other independent hotels / resorts, each only a few miles apart from each others. Much larger than its competitors, The Club Med, positioned as a full service tourism company, charters its own airplanes. Among other advantages, it includes tennis courts and a golf course—also accessible to non-Club Med clients with an extra fee. Typical of Club Med's value proposition, the resort possesses its own team of animators (GO) that helps build the atmosphere specific to the global hospitality network. The four other hotels offer middle-upper range to lower-middle range services. In this context, Le Zéphyr is positioned as the highest standing but also the most expensive resort of the coast.

At the national level, the resort area of Saly represents the principal competition for the Casamancese touristic spot of Le Zéphyr. Fifty miles away from Dakar, it is well connected to Europe via regular flights to the capital—unlike Casamance which is particularly isolated since the bankruptcy of Sénégal Air in 2009. Yet Saly acquired a bad reputation among many segments of tourists due to the anarchic proliferation
of real estate and resort projects that significantly damaged the natural beauty of the coast (Hachez, 2013).

1.D. The Clients

According to a marketing study based on a sample of 150 clients of Le Zéphyr and conducted by an intern present at the resort the previous year (Hachez, 2013), half of clients come from France, a quarter from Belgium, and the remaining from other countries, primarily European. Western—mostly francophone—clients therefore represent an overwhelming majority while African customers are exceptions. Based on the same sample, clients' average age is around 47 years old, the most represented age range being the 55-60 years old. Although villas can accommodate between 6 and 8 clients, visitors come in average groups of 2.7 persons. From my observations—based on frequent visits at the resort over the last seven years—most clients can be divided into three categories: families with children under eighteen (estimated 35%), young senior couples (estimated 25%), and mid-40 to mid-50 couples, who often come in groups of friends (estimated 40%). From my interactions with clients, it seems that one may frequently encounter successful entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, architects and senior managers of large corporations, and more sporadically, politicians and renowned artists—both Europeans and Senegalese.

The price per night varies widely based on the accommodation selected (Suite or Loft, line Ocean, Azure or Garden), the season (three different pricing ranges), and the number of clients occupying the accommodation (the higher the number of clients in a group, the lower the price per person). Overall, prices range from €95 (~$132) per person per night for a group of 8 renting a Garden Villa at the end of
March, to €287 (~$400) per person, per night for a couple in an Ocean Suite during the Christmas period. Clients who book three months in advance receive a 5% discount, those booking six months in advance are granted 10%. In practice, however, prospective customers do not hesitate to request a reduction when they discuss the booking—via email directly with the resort Director. Discounts are also provided more informally to clients who are loyal and those who plan a long stay. In addition to an accommodation with half board, clients spend on average €20 (~$28) per adult and €12 (~$16.70) per child per day for a full pension, and add to that the price of drinks and cocktails (on average $10.5 for a cocktail and $40 for a bottle of wine, subject to significant import taxes), the cost of excursions ($100 on average), and approximately €900 (~$1250) for a round-trip airplane ticket from Paris. Adding up all these costs, an average client will pay (an estimated) $3,950 for a one-week stay at the resort, $6,500 for two weeks. Occasionally, individuals or corporations privatize the resort for a long weekend or a whole week. Prices for such events are negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

Clients frequently use terms such as charming, calm, relaxing and convivial to describe the atmosphere at the resort. In their words, the personnel are described as “adorable” and the service is seen as “personalized” and “professional.” An online survey from 39 respondents (Hachez, 2013) highlights that the primary factors appreciated by tourists at the resort are: the calm (88% of importance), the sympathy of the personnel (86%), the quality of service (85%) and the conviviality of the place (80%). The personality of the managing Directors is also mentioned (70%). From my own experience, the staff seems always smiling and enthusiastic. They know every client, call them by their first name, and invariably provide a friendly
greeting. While this may be thought of as a job requirement, my regular interactions with employees and local friends outside the resort—I have been invited to many dinners, drinks and artistic events as well as several baptisms—suggest that the joviality that they display in the professional context also applies to their personal life—although more moderately.

Aside from criteria specific to Le Zéphyr, clients also point out the kindness of local populations (77%) and the tropical climate (75%) as important factors contributing to their overall satisfaction. Although not included in the survey, the absence of time difference (only one hour for Western European tourists) is also particularly appreciated. The quality and diversity of excursions, although cited, is not put forward as unanimously as other criteria (53%), suggesting that a significant segment of resort visitors primarily seek some rest away—but not too far—from their usual environment.

At the end of each stay, the management team encourages clients to leave comments on Trip Advisor. Since the resort has a page on the website, it has received only two negative comments—although it may be that unhappy clients are likely to take the time to provide online feedback. In general, comments are laudatory; in particular, they highlight the feeling of proximity clients have to the staff, and the type of experience they enjoy at the resort:

"[...] Your resort is stunning. It offers all the luxury of a 5-Star hotel while being small, familial, and warm. Everything is made so easy that you don't have to worry about your children. They loved it too. At the end of our stay, they didn't eat with us anymore, they had made friends from various ages and nationalities and had their
own table. The personnel is incredibly warm and welcoming, the Chief, the beach attendant, the receptionist, the pool-attendants, the housemaids, they were all taking really good care of us and even plaid with our kids, beach games or board games! [...] It's not surprising that many families we met come back every year; we already dream of coming back for Christmas.

Outside the resort, the region is so beautiful; people are smiling, warm, grateful. We felt safe everywhere. Excursions were mind-blowing, from quad bikes on the dunes to fishing in pirogues, from wood-fired oysters to visits of various villages... All of us felt in paradise during our 12-day stay. The day we left, our kids (11 and 8 years old) were crying when saying good-bye to the whole staff whom they had become attached to, and vice-versa...

And this beautiful place is just 6 hours away from Brussels... sun guaranteed, ideal temperature, only one hour of time difference, how can a place beat that? // Stayed in January 2014 – Family Trip 

" It is probably one of the greatest addresses of Senegal. What a place! What a pleasure to walk around in a resort looked after like no other! [...] Clients have their own African house (usually 3 bedrooms), some with a sea view [...], or a view on the resort’s luxuriant gardens. You can enjoy the beautiful light, this splendid sunset. Beach below the villas, white send, calm sea. Two restaurants, the team serves lunches at the beach restaurant, and dinners in the main restaurant, very classy, warm colors, incredible wine, whisky and rum lists, unique in Africa, a barman at ease with any cocktail (even the “Long Island” is made by the book, it says a lot about the level of mastery). In the kitchen, the team is completely up to the standard of the resort. The personnel are nice, helpful, and available without being oppressive; and the hosts are
welcoming like nowhere else; and very professional spa area! [...] // Stayed in March 2014 - Trip in couple 

“ We are not going to forget our stay in your hotel. It was really fantastic, with a very, very nice personnel. Hello to Marine, Apolline who gave me a really good massage. We don't forget Jason, Djenaba and all the others. [...] We will be back next season for a longer stay, inchala! // Stayed in April 2014 - Family Trip ”

While financial viability is important to the two Directors, managers who work closely with them stress how their primary objective is not to be found at the bottom of the hotel's balance sheet. Rather, it is in the satisfaction of their clients. Charles reads all trip advisor's comments with great attention, answers each with a personalized acknowledgment, and forwards some to the rest of the staff to congratulate them on their collective achievement. Apolline, a recently promoted manager, comments:

“ There used to be years where the resort was completely full, when there was up to 90 clients at the same time, [...] and Charles and Marine discussed it among themselves and agreed: ‘never ever again!’ [...] They don't want a hotel where everybody is packed, where you have several rounds of service for each meal, they want something where everybody feels well. [...] And so they set the maximum number of clients to 60 now, so as not to alter the experience. The goal here, it's not to make a €100,000. The goal is to keep this experience alive. One of the very important point for Charles, it's Trip Advisor. [...] At the beginning, I didn't realize... I didn't understand why it mattered to him. But in the end, today we have 158 comments from clients, and when you lived one week or ten days with them, and that you then read their comment, they will always mention names of the members of the team. When you
read it, [...] it moves you. [...] Many mentioned my name, and I was not expecting it. And now I understand Charles, because we spend so much time organizing everything for clients to feel well. When you read that [...] it means something. ”

1.E. Geographical, Economical and Political Context

Senegal is located on the east coast of the African continent, between Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau, and encloses the smaller territory of Gambia, shaped by the river of the same name. Formerly a French colony, Senegal acquired independence in 1960, when the country left the Mali federation. The government is democratically elected by universal suffrage and, according to CIA’s World Factbook, “remains one of the most stable democracies in Africa, [with] a long history of participating in international peacekeeping and regional mediation.” Yet, a few zones in the country are considered dangerous to occidentals; the website of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, providing basic information to French tourists and citizens living abroad, stresses that “travelers may circulate in all [Senegalesel region, except in few areas of Casamance and at the frontier with Mali and part of the frontier with Mauritania.”

The Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance (MFDC) has led a “low-level separatist insurgency” (in CIA’s World Factbook terms) in the region for more than 30 years. Several peace deals have failed to resolve the conflict which carries on with more or less intensity depending on the area. Most of the Casamancese region is listed by French authorities as “not recommended except for imperative reasons”, the northern area is stated as “strongly not recommended” and a small zone extending from the southern coast—where Le Zephyr is located to Ziginchor, the
regional capital—is referred to as safe with “accrued vigilance,” as in most part of the country. The diplomatic website stresses more specifically that the hospitality area on the South coast of Casamance does not present any specific threat. Although data suggests that Le Zéphyr clients are not worried about the Casamancese conflict, it is hard to estimate the loss of prospects that it generates (Hachez 2013). Tourism agencies and tour operators are reluctant to promote the region, to the benefit of other Senegalese destinations such as the popular Sally area. This phenomenon led to a decrease in the number of flights available from Europe (especially following the bankruptcy of Air Sénégal) and the shutdown of several hotels in Casamance; between 2006 and 2008, three resorts of the “Sénégal Hôtels” consortium closed down.

Abdoulaye Wade, Senegalese president from 1999 to 2012, neglected the tourism sector that he saw as benefiting only to foreign investors. After 10 years in power, he declared: “Up until now, I did not help tourism at all.” Under his presidency, airport taxes increased to reach roughly $235 per flight, and touristic promotion to France and Belgium was minimal although these countries represent an interesting visitor-base due to their common language and high spending power (Hachez, 2013). Macky Sall, the recently elected president, suggested that he would support the tourism sector more than did his predecessor; yet European entrepreneurs in Casamance did not interpret his government’s decision to establish a $70 visa entrance as a positive sign, pointing out the additional barrier to foreign tourists.

Casamance is the only tropical region of Senegal. Its particular verdant climate strongly corresponds to the tourist season. The rainy season, also called wintering
(hivernage), goes from July to October and is characterized by warmer temperatures as well as frequent and intense rains that pushes many tourism businesses to close for a few months. Most resorts and hotels are open from September to June. Yet the best touristic period spreads from mid-October to end of May, when there is almost no rain and the temperatures are considered more clement for Europeans.

The region is primarily rural. It is largely populated by Jola (Diola in French), an ethnic group that accounts for two third of the Casmance inhabitants but represents less than 10% of the total Senegalese population. Historically, the Jola are a rice culture-centered civilization that lived in numerous scattered communities in the region. While many of their economic activities turn around traditional practices—e.g. rice culture, fishing, nurturing groundnuts, farming cows, pigs, goats, sheep and chicken, and producing palm wine and palm oil—the younger generations progressively leave the countryside to find work in the cities (Linares, 2009). Many Jola people have converted to Islam or Catholicism but animism remains the basis of their spirituality, a spirituality that frames many social activities (Balonon-Rosen, 2013) [See Chapter 13]. For many, French, the language used in the area schools, constitutes their third language after the Joola—i.e., term used to refer to the ensemble of Jola dialects—and Wolof—i.e., language of the largest ethnic group present in Senegal.

1. F. The Present Study

Although the two resort Directors are Belgians and most managerial positions are filled by Europeans, a large majority of the personnel employed at the resort are locals from nearby villages. In this regard, the conditions in which these employees
live contrasts sharply with those offered to clients at the resort. Their houses consist of two or three small rooms that, combined, rarely exceed the size of the master bedroom of a resort’s villa. They are not equipped with household appliances, except for TVs, radios and cellphones. Laundry is hand-washed, wells constitute the only access to water and public pit latrines the only toilets; meals are cooked on a fire outside the house and eaten in the traditional Senegalese way: on the flour, in one big plate in which everybody picks the food by hand; rice composes the basis of every meal, most often accompanied with vegetables, sometimes with fish, only occasionally with white meat, much more rarely with beef or lamb.

Furthermore, these disparities are also present at the workplace, for their salary and working conditions at the resort are significantly different from that of their European colleagues. The ratio of average local full-time employees’ salary (roughly the 30% most ‘privileged’ local employees) to that of a European is of 1 to 5.5. In addition, in quality of expatriates, European employees receive room and board within specially arranged apartments at the resort, as part of their contract.

In such a context, one may wonder how Le Zéphyr operates as an organization: How does the organization deal with the bipolarity of its community (locals and Europeans) and what group dynamics does it create? How are work activities structured? What managerial style regulates the day-to-day operations? How is local culture reflected in the resort’s activities? How do locals manage their work aiming at supporting a way of life they have never experienced themselves? How do they conceive of the gap of salary and conditions with their European counterparts? The present ethnographic study is an attempt to explore these questions.
In this thesis, I explore various core dimensions of the organizational culture at Le Zéphyr Beach Resort. My first encounter with the resort was in 2007—seven years ago—during a family holiday trip in Africa. Then a young business undergrad on vacation, I had the opportunity to experience Le Zéphyr as a simple (fully indulged) client. Like most travelers privileged enough to stay in the resort, I was immediately charmed by its verdant gardens, spacious villas, and welcoming employees.

Absorbed by the atmosphere—as well as by the languorous state that accompanied my heliotropic holiday—I was paying little attention to the energy and efforts deployed by the resort’s team in order to sustain such a pleasant environment. I was indulgently experiencing all the benefits the resort has to offer: sunbathing on the private beach, sipping cocktails made of exotic fruits, splashing around in the swimming pool, discovering the local culture through excursions to traditional villages, tasting the well-rounded cuisine of a European Head Chief...

Although brief, informal interactions with the resort’s owners and founders introduced me to certain organizational issues their team was facing, at the time I had little more than a conversational interest in those issues. It took seven years and an ethnographic assignment at MIT Sloan for me to look at Le Zéphyr with the eye of an organizational researcher.
Before I dive into the outcome of this ethnographic endeavor, it is important for me to explain the context in which this paper was written. First and foremost, I must confess that this is my first excursion into the academic field of ethnography. My experience of this field is essentially limited to methodological readings—in particular *The Cultural Experience, Second Edition* (McCurdy, Spradley & Shandy, 2004); *Business Anthropology, Second Edition* (Jordan, 2012); *The Ethnographic Interview* (Spradley, 1979); and *Tales Of The Field, Second Edition* (Van Maanen, 2011)—as well as valuable discussions with and generous pieces of advice from my thesis advisor, Professor John Van Maanen.

The ethnographic raw material on which the following study is based was collected at Le Zéphyr at the end of 2013 and beginning of 2014, over a period of ten days, seven of which were dedicated to formal interviewing. The material comprises field notes, artifacts kindly shared by my informants (organizational chart, to-do-lists, control & quality check-lists, newsletters, brochures, etc.), a series of photographs taken at the studied location, and almost 23 hours of interviews of different members of the resort’s organization. This material was supplemented by memories of informal discussions and personal observations from my 10-day field trip, as well as from my frequent prior visits—once per year on average—at the resort over the past 7 years.

The formal interviews, the most substantial component of this ethnographic material, were audio recorded. They gather the testimonies of 20 informants—i.e., approximately 40% of the organization—whom I met individually or, exceptionally and when deemed relevant, in pairs. These informants were carefully selected to
provide a fair representation of the diversity of profiles within the employee community. The sample includes people from all functions, contractual statuses, genders and levels in the hierarchy. With the exception of two exchanges, interviews lasted a minimum of 1 hour, and a maximum of two and a half hours. A few informants were interviewed two or three times when further details were required regarding a specific comment or topic, or when certain facts collected during other interviews needed corroboration.

Interviews were loosely structured, and conducted, for the most part, at the resort—e.g. private office, rest area, security post, restaurant during closed hours. The informant was invited to describe the events and activities of a typical workday, and contrast the structure of this standard day with that of a standard week, that of a standard week with that of a standard month, and that of a standard month with that of a standard season, to end up with the out-of-season period. When time allowed, the interviews continued with a series of questions based on prior salient comments made by the informant, or with questions I had prepared in advance, focusing on the perception the informant had of her position, role, responsibility, status and consideration within the overall organization.

It is important to note that I used these recordings as complementary material during the writing process. Most of the Chapters of this study were drafted based on memory and then complemented by interview quotes, to make it livelier. Interviews were only partially transcribed and translated from French to English. Translations intend to transmit, as much as possible, the talking style of the informants, though
it is not to exclude that certain subtleties of these testimonies may have been lost in translation.

Experienced ethnographers often advise focusing the interview process on only one or two informants when conducting a first (and short) ethnographic piece. In doing so, one may build a deeper level of collaboration, thereby getting more insightful and trustworthy testimonies. It would be difficult for me to contradict these experts. Yet, several reasons led me to proceed with a larger number of informants:

(a) *Time and Availability.* My field trip took place between Christmas and New Year’s Eve, the busiest time of the tourist season. The number of clients was at its yearly peak and many events had to be organized for them. It would have been difficult for me to monopolize the attention of a single employee for several hours per day. Indeed, I feel extremely fortunate and grateful that I was allowed, over the course of a week, to obtain 23 hours of potential work time from this small organization during its rush period.

(b) *Heterogeneity of the subjects.* The resort is a small organization (between 45 and 50 employees); many staff members have a unique and non-interchangeable role. Consequently, experience of the workplace may differ significantly among employees. The identity of the organization results from the dynamics of different sub-groups resulting in a panoply of backgrounds, knowledge, sets of values, skillsets and perceptions of the work life at the resort. I felt it important to account for this diversity during the interview process.
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(c) **Orientation of my work.** Capturing the diversity of points of view was central to my work, since this thesis focuses on providing an in-depth description of the perceptions of work activities at the resort, as well as studying the dynamics that these perceptions engender among the employee population as a whole.

(d) **Triangulation of information.** Whenever possible, the facts, stories and remarks collected during my interviews and ultimately used in this thesis were subject to a process of triangulation—i.e., fact checking with one or two individuals. Indeed, during my recorded discussions, I observed a tendency of a few informants to share oblique versions of certain events—I shall come back to this phenomenon later in the study. In this light, the process of validation proved indispensable to guarantee the integrity of my work, thereby justifying the use of a larger range of informants.

Once past the hurdles of collecting relevant and reliable material, I was confronted with the no less difficult task of structuring it into an objective and meaningful paper. In this respect, Adler and Adler's *Paradise Laborers, Hotel Work in The Global Economy* (2004), in conjunction with Sherman’s *Class Acts, Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels* (2007), served as a modest literature review that helped me position my work within the context of the existing ethnographic work on hotel employees. They were reference and comparison points from which I could make sense of my own raw material and define the direction in which I intended to take it. Based on these references, and after drawing on some of the most salient points derived from my interviews, I wrote and structured the content of this ethnographic
piece into a series of drafts, connecting the disparate sections into what is, I hope, a coherent whole.

The structuring process also yielded its own crop of questionings and struggles. Stepping back to the origin of this project, my primary motive in writing of this paper was my desire to first-hand experience with organizational research. In this respect, the enterprise definitely met my expectations; I believe I have come up against some of the most fundamental questions inherent in the discipline: how does one write ethnography? What are the main difficulties one faces? How can one tackle them in a relevant and honest way? What benefits do these undertakings bring for both the sociologists writing them, and the fellow academics or novices reading them? Yet, I have probably raised more questions than I have answered and I hope to pursue them in later ethnographic endeavors.

On the one hand, indebted to my laymen readers, I have tried my best to make this study as exciting as possible, occasionally going slightly beyond the material I collected to provide further insights on certain phenomena I observed. On the other hand, conscious of the importance of the ethnographer's need for integrity, I have clearly stated as such these 'beyond-material' comments and tried to include here descriptions as precise as possible. I hope the balance I have found will satisfy both the curiosity of a few innocent readers and the interest, even modest, of a toughened academic.

Finally, and by mean of conclusion to this methodological note, it seems worth including a few lines on the writing codes that frame the style of this paper. First, the names of the informants as well as all the characters involved in the events
discussed in these chapters have been modified for anonymity. With this same concern in mind, I also cut any piece of data that I judged potentially hurtful to my subjects, even when the said data was relevant to the topic discussed.

Second, as in many cross-cultural workplaces, resort employees communicate in different languages, in particular, in French and Jola—the dialect of the main ethnic group in the region. To avoid confusion for the readers, the key vocabulary terms were translated in English whenever possible. The original terms, however, are indicated in brackets the first time they appear in the text.

I hope you will take as much pleasure reading this study as I had writing it.
PART I

Work Activities and
Organizational Structure
Although the size of the resort's team varies per season and partly depends on how one defines employee—permanent versus occasional—the organization of Le Zéphyr comprises between 45 and 50 members.

Activities are dispatched among 8 functional departments: reception, laundry room (buanderie or lingerie), shop (boutique), wellness area (espace bien-être), maintenance & leisure activities (maintenance & loisir), security (sécurité), gardens (jardins) and restaurant-bar. At the head of these divisions, the management team (la direction) comprises four directors including the two founders and owners (see Figure 1 for an example of organizational chart).
The size of the departments varies significantly—i.e., between 1 and 9 employees—and so does their responsibilities. They operate as separate teams and as such, are each directed by a team leader who dispatches tasks, trains recently hired workers, and acts as contact point for the management team. While departments are often given a lot of autonomy in the way they manage their workload, the management team—seconded by its interns—carefully and regularly controls the output of their work. From such independence in the way they work, has emerged distinct department cultures which we shall each explore individually.
Chapter 4 – The Restaurant

In a purely French tradition, the three daily meals, breakfast from 7am to 10:30am, lunch from 1pm to 2:30pm and dinner from 7pm to 10pm, structure the day of clients and European employees who also eat at the restaurants. Clients spend between 3 and 4 hours per day in one of the two restaurants of the resort, the Hâle des Gourmets (a pseudonym) often called the Beach Restaurant (Restaurant Plage)–where lunches are served, and the Chalutier (a pseudonym) simply called the Restaurant–located up the hill, near the villas, for breakfast and dinners. As a result, days quickly become mental grids that clients fill with their various activities in between meals.

As in most restaurants, the department is divided into two working teams with distinct competencies, the Kitchen and the Room. The Kitchen is composed of cooks who prepare the meals, the Room of waiters in charge of the service. Yet, given that their tasks are highly complementary and interdependent, the two groups work hands in hands and share similar daily schedules, arranged around the three meals of the clients.

4.A. The Kitchen

The culture of the kitchen personnel often reflects the personality of its Head Chef. At Le Zéphyr, the staff is diligent, focused and calm during the cooking time, but
definitely not the last to joke around when the pressure is off. Ansoumane, Head Chef, further explains:

"How do you manage [a team with such responsibilities]? Humanely. Personally, I like to work without shouting, without yelling here and there, without gesticulating for any reason... calmly, peacefully, with respect."

Ansoumane, a Frenco-Senegalese Chef, is at the head of a team of four employees and two interns. Together, they prepare meals for up to 60 people, at breakfast, lunch and dinner, trying to offer variety, originality and constant quality.

Ansoumane was trained in France and climbed the ladder of the kitchen hierarchy through different experiences in French and Swiss hotels. His Sous-Chef, Patrice, a French hired recently (2014), was also trained in France and worked various kitchen jobs in resorts there. Coming to the Casamancese coast for extended holidays, he heard that Le Zéphyr was looking for a Sous-Chef. He took his bike, met with Ansoumane and the Directors and signed a contract few days later, few weeks before the season began. With the exception of Ansoumane and Patrice, cooks and interns are Senegalese, trained in some of the best catering schools of their country. Most of the (non-intern) cooks worked at Le Zéphyr for more than three years and have already served under the supervision of two or three Head-Chiefs at the resort—a position for which the turnover is much higher than for kitchen aids. Ansoumane explains that he found the team already formed when he arrived in 2012 and did not feel the need to change its configuration with the exception of hiring the Sous-Chef.
To accomplish its mission, the team has a basic daily schedule. One employee starts early—6:30am—in order to prepare the breakfast: viennoiseries, waffles, crepes, toasts, bacon and scrambled eggs, cheese, ham, fruits, fresh juices, tea, hot chocolate and coffee, composes a large buffet. The Head Chef joins him around 8am to plan the rest of the day but also to supervise the breakfast process. After inspecting the cleanliness of the kitchen, he evaluates the inventory to prepare future supply orders.

The Casamancese coast is first and foremost a remote rural area composed of small, rather traditional, villages. For this reason, all products needed at the kitchen can not be obtained locally, and inventory must be monitored with even more scrutiny and anticipation than in typical restaurants. The resort relies on four main sources of supply. The two organic vegetable gardens from Le Zéphyr provide most of the greens; the meat and many common products such as ice cream and yogurt, are imported from Dakar, capital of Senegal. A few products, harder to find in the country, are brought directly from Europe by the Chef or the Directors when they fly back from home. Finally, fruits and fish are purchased locally from itinerant intermediary sellers, as I shall further detail below.

Itinerant sellers visit the resort every morning to sell fresh products. The Ladies (les Dames) supply fruits and vegetables. They walk several miles per day, from hotel to hotel, and restaurant to restaurant, with a basin of merchandise on their head—and, sometimes, also a baby on their back—to trade fresh goods for meager earnings [See Picture 5]. Because a lot of women need money to support the basic needs of their offspring, and because, too often, no better job alternative is available to them, many
end up selling the result of their labor that way, thereby generating a strong asymmetric between the number of sellers and the number of buyers. The Head Chef, in charge of negotiating and buying the products, developed his own approach to deal with these trades. He expressed his philosophy in these (loosely reported) terms:

"The job they are doing, it's really hard. They walk a lot, with heavy merchandise, every day, under a hot sun, to secure a small sum of money. I rarely negotiate the price with them. I just make sure it is a fair price, and the products are of good quality. I never buy everything I need from one lady. They come all the way here you know. Most of the time, I buy a small amount from each of them."

The other sellers are the fish middlemen: men who regularly stop at the hotels and restaurants to sell fresh loads of fish from the nearby villages. In contrast to the Ladies, they often travel by moped and, due to the nature of their merchandise, deliver orders on a second round rather than carrying it all day long.

While dinner menus are predefined at the beginning of the season, lunch menus are built the morning of the given day, as explained by Ansoumane:

"[The others] arrive around 8:30am, 9am latest [...] [and we] start to build the [lunch] menu. I tell them to participate as well. They know what's in stock, what's not. [...] We try to do things so there is no waste. [...] We check cold rooms; we try to do something really... nice, with what we have in stock, so we don't end up with a ton of [unused] merchandise."
Given that a significant part of the restaurant supply is imported from Dakar and that the quantities used for dinners tend to be variable, the flexibility of lunch menus reveals a convenient buffer to control for the outflow of merchandise. They are usually composed of seven dishes: a sandwich, a salad, a pasta, a meat, a fish, and two deserts.

"We try to do that so clients eat a light lunch... a small desert with a few fruits and an ice-cream. At night, it's more elaborate, more gastronomic. There's a big difference between the two."

Once the lunch menu is defined, the team starts the organization of the dinner (*la mise en place*). During this phase, the Head Chef explains to his staff how each meal is prepared: which ingredients, what quantities, how to prepare the dish, step by step, and how to present it on the plate. The team sometimes begins certain preparations in advance—e.g., sauces, pastries, and vegetables for the soup. During this phase, Ansoumane looks at and tastes everything to make sure his team has full mastery of the task at hand:

"I don't do [the recipe] to show them. They are professionals. In general, I explain it to them and they know what they have to do. And I still take a look at everything to see whether it is going in the right direction or not. [...] If they are not sure, they ask me. And if it's not going where I want, I adjust, I tell them."

In the kitchen, the work split follows the classic structure of the restaurant business. One worker is assigned for each of three cooking stations: hot (*chaud*, hot dishes), cold (*froid*, cold dishes) and dessert (*dessert*) [See Picture 6]; the Head Chef and his
Sous-Chef offer help wherever it is the most needed, as well as control and supervise the overall process.

Only after their service, around 3pm to 3:30pm, does the kitchen team eat. One of the four workers in charge of the breakfast (three waiters and one cook), off duty for lunch, cooks for the whole restaurant staff—Room plus Kitchen—while the others are in service. A specific lunch budget is allocated to them, with which they prepare traditional West African dishes. Since orders for kitchen employees’ lunch are amalgamated with those for commercial use, they may enjoy a similar product quality as the clients, although they usually do not use them to prepare the same type of dishes. Budget is limited though, and some employees point out that if they were to stick to it, they would not be able to cook every day, so they sometimes stick to chicken bones or fish heads left from the meal prepared for the clients.

It is also important to mention here that periodically higher than expected raw material orders led the management team to believe that restaurant employees may be involved in leakages (coulures): practice of cooking too much food in order to collect the leftovers for private use. For this reason, they recently started to implement a stricter tracking and monitoring of the restaurant supplies. In practice however, such malpractice remains hard to confirm, let alone to quantify. I have personally witnessed some kitchen employees preparing leftovers of petit fours the following morning so as to share them with surrounding employees from various departments—and, just coincidentally, with me. Yet whether these leftovers were the result of a lower number of orders from clients, an unintentionally overestimated cooking quantity, or a voluntary one is difficult if not impossible to determine.
Back from the beach-restaurant after the lunch service, employees gather at the scullery of the Chalutier, and sit on the floor, in a circle, around a large platter of Mafé (rice with meat cooked in a rich tomato and peanut paste based sauce), Tieboudien (national Senegalese dish made of spiced fish, with a large mix of vegetables, served with rice cooked in a tomato-based sauce) or another traditional dish. The meal is eaten in the pure Senegalese custom, by forming balls of hot food within the palm of one’s right hand that one then carries directly to one’s mouth. I may testify that the practice requires exceptional dexterity, for a lack of mastery inevitably results in eating only a few handful of rice before the plate is completely empty.

While cooks officially have a break from 3pm to 6pm, it is rarely respected, in particular during seasonal peaks:

"Normally, we should have a 3-hour break, but there is no normality in the cuisine business, you know. We don’t count our working hours. When there is work, we are here all day long. Over the last fifteen days, we had... what... half an hour, an hour of rest per day. [...] When there are less people, then we take normal breaks." (Ansoumane)

Work is resumed early so the team can prepare itself for the dinner, the most effortful time of the day. Dinner menus are built by the Chief during the off-season. They are conceived as a 2-week pattern repeated over the whole season with minimal variations. This corresponds to a total of approximately 120 plates, including starters, entrées and deserts. In composing the plates, Ansoumane works much like a writer; he carries with him a small personal notepad in which he jots
down ideas as they come to him. Back to Europe, he takes between one and two months to transform ideas into plates, and plates into menus.

Returning from their lunch break to their respective stations, cooks get back to their duty to ensure that everything is ready by 7:30pm, when the first clients arrive. The atmosphere in the kitchen progressively becomes more tense and everybody stays focused, only to relax slowly by the end of service, around 10pm or 10:30pm.

Ansoumane comments:

"[...] When the service really starts, we should hear only my voice. [...] Even the waiters, I tell them not to talk in the kitchen. [...] Otherwise, as soon as we start to talk, chatting, 'which table does it go to?'; that kind of thing, they make mistakes [...]. I tell them 'Take this plate, bring it to that table;' and they take it, they leave, they do whatever they want with it, but they don't ask any question, because it's already quite tense; personally, I need to stay focused."

The Head Chef tastes every dish, and double-checks the cooking and the presentation of plates before it leaves the kitchen. The tasting is particularly important, for the kitchen team is primarily composed of locals with Senegalese gastronomic tastes, which differ significantly from European cuisine. Although professionally trained, and educated to tasting such dishes, they may also be slightly biased by their customs for more spicy food. In addition, several of them are Muslim and, in theory, should not drink alcohol or eat pork. Similarly, eating raw meat or fish such as Carpaccio or tartar steak is unnatural to locals.
While Ansoumane sends his Sous-Chef to help cooks at their different posts, he keeps an overall view of the inflow and outflow of plates through the order notes brought by the waiters. This task is one of the toughest and most crucial of all; a mistake in the supervision of orders can disorganize the whole process.

"Last time, I asked the waiter to bring plates to [group X], they sent it to [group Y]. But it was completely different. Some plates were missing, since it was not the same table. " (Ansoumane)

At the restaurant, coordination between the Kitchen and the Room is indeed essential.

4.B. The Room

The Room team is composed of a barman and four waiters, supervised by the maitre d'hôtel and his deputy. Together, they take note of, execute and prepare bills for clients' orders at the restaurant. Since clients most often attend breakfast, lunches and dinners at Le Zéphyr, the personnel of the Room have repeated interactions with them—up to four or five times per day, including drink orders outside of meal times. For this reason, the job of the team is probably the most “front office” one, even before the Reception.

Employees from the Room are all locals. The minimum hiring criteria set by the management team are that candidates have (a) their baccalauréat (high school degree) and (b) at least one prior work experience as a waiter—except for interns still attached to a school. Nonetheless, the competition is fierce and, in effect, Room employees are for the most part professionally trained, having attended a Senegalese hospitality school. The ability to speak fluent French with confidence is
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also not overlooked. Further training is provided during work via informal feedback from the maître d’hôtel.

The behavior of the Room team may be qualified as a subtle mix of formal and informal, a balance between the deferent politeness required by their profession, and the extreme affableness they seem accustomed to in their private relationships. The resultant impression for clients is that of being invited by old friends with an exceptional sense of hospitality and an eagerness to please you. The personnel adapt their behavior to each customer so as to avoid any feelings of undesired proximity or discourteousness.

Upon your arrival at the restaurant, a waiter welcomes you with a large smile, acknowledging your entry and greeting you by your first name with a communicative enthusiasm. Young clients receive a demonstrative handshake or an embrace. The personnel tutoie them—French, like most Latin languages, distinguishes between the polite and the less formal singular second person, respectively vouvoiement and tutoiement—and do not hesitate to add to their name a “my friend” or “my buddy” when taking their orders. Older clients are welcomed with a slightly more formal attitude; the staff also calls them by their first name but keeps more physical distance and stick to the vouvoiement.

During my various trips at the resort, I have heard numerous clients mentioning how impressed they were by local employees’ apparent facility to memorize the names of all the members of their group or family after only one or two interactions; I confess having felt ashamed on several occasions myself, when a member of the staff greeted me using my first name and that I had to cast a quick—though never
quick enough—glance at his nametag to respond appropriately to his personalized salutation. Such attention seems to leave clients with the feeling that the staff is genuinely interested in them as individuals rather than as customers.

While one may expect such attitudes to be the result of a specific training, it is important to note that, based on my interviews with several members of the team, it seems that most of the feedback and comments provided by the maitre d'hôtel revolve around methods and individual organization of one's work more than behavior with clients. More probably, the overall attitude of the Room team may result from the screening process during the recruitment phase, as well as an emulation by the most junior team members of the behaviors of colleagues more accustomed with the workplace. It is also important to note that, while Europeans may feel a true impression of bonding and friendliness with the staff, employees may interpret these interactions differently, as reported by one of them:

"With clients, we talk a bit about Casamance, you know. I'm born here so... [...] I don't really remember [what we talk about]. Personally, I think about earning money. My job, actually, it's not what I'm doing now or what I did in the past. It's what I do tomorrow to earn money. I don't remember what we talk about. I can talk, just like that... I'm careful not to offend [them], so tomorrow, if we meet again, we can say hello to each other."

The workday for the Room is divided into three important times, each corresponding to one of the daily meals; the breakfast and the dinner, both served at the Chalutier, and the lunch, served at the Beach restaurant, down the hill. Each of these three important times starts with the preparation (mise en place), during which some staff
members set the restaurant according to a dedicated checklist—e.g., verify the overall cleanliness of the restaurant and bathroom, control the stock of drinks, prepare snacks, set the table (tablecloth, cutlery and glasses), fold the napkins, check the condition of the flower bouquets, light the table candles, empty all ashtrays, place children’s chairs, turn on the external lights, check that the external audio system works properly, etc. Then follows the actual service.

Breakfasts are open-buffet meals requiring minimal service. Two waiters stand discreetly behind the buffet tables, close to the kitchen door. They greet the arriving clients and make sure all products are available in reasonable quantities throughout the service. When a product fall short, one of them goes back to the kitchen to either inform the cook—should the product be a prepared dish such as bacon, scrambled eggs or waffles—or get some directly from the stock. In case the missing item requires minimum preparation—e.g., coffee, hot water, slices of cheese, fruits—the waiter may do it without any help from the kitchen employee.

Lunch and dinners are served directly at the table, according to a menu in which clients have the choice among three or four different dishes for starters, entries and deserts. Waiters present the menus, take orders, transfer the notes to the kitchen, bring the plates to the tables, open wine bottles for the clients, listen to their specific requirements and, when time permits, ask them whether “everything is fine?” On his side, the bartender prepares soft drinks and cocktails. While he may prepare the classic margarita, bloody Mary, mojito, piña colada, etc., he often puts forward cocktails of his own invention, adding homemade juices of local exotic fruits—e.g., passion fruit, ditar, bissap, mad, bouille.
After the service, some of the team members do the dishwashing, largely done manually. Clients, however, often stay late at their table or at the terrace, especially at night, thereby extending the shifts of the team. During seasonal peaks in particular, overtime is extremely frequent and many employees complain about these non-paid extra hours:

“Normally, I should start at 11am and take a break at 3:30pm or 4pm. [...] But, during holiday periods, if we do not have the [appropriate] headcount, like now, [we start] at 9am to take the equipment down to the beach restaurant. ”

“ We should finish the service at 10pm. But this is not the case. The clients, they are still there. They are still there. They have drinks. They talk [...]. ”

As a result, workdays can be very long. A Room employee may start at 9:30am and finish at 11pm with only an hour of break for lunch. Such work rhythm, repeated over time and combined with an absence of days off during seasonal peak, can prove to be particularly exhausting. As a result, overtime, which is neither paid nor retrieved from the low season hours, is the catalyst of many complaints from the team.

Another subject of frustration is the hardness of the work, in particular the regular back and forth between the two restaurants. Since lunch is served at the Beach restaurant, and since tableware is common to the two locations, the Room staff must do several trips everyday, walking up and down the stairs that connect the beach to the main section of the resort, to bring the cutlery glasses and drinks from one
restaurant to the other. Room employees comment on the daily preparation of the Beach restaurant:

"You can see us bringing stuff every morning, and bringing them back at night. Glasses, there’s not enough. Knives, forks, there’s not enough. We need to go back upstairs. If you forget [something]... [...] imagine: you take the stairs, 60 steps, just to get a spoon. You want to cry. I swear to you. You have to go up, down, and up again... in the end, the job here, it’s not hard. What’s hard... the design of the resort... I don’t know, there’s stairs everywhere [...]. At night sometimes, when I’m in my bed, I turn over, I stretch my legs... hop! I get cramps. I swear, terrible cramps!"

"For how long will this [back and forth] be going on!? [The management team] tells us there’s no budget to buy glasses and stuff. Come on! Who will believe that?"

An important custom of the resort’s life is pre-dinner drinks: before joining their dining table, clients often indulge in a drink with their group (family, friends, etc.) at the bar counter or at the terrace. From fresh exotic juices and cocktails prepared by the barman to a well-furnished collection of wine and whisky, the resort offers a large range of drinks. Pre-dinner drinks are a default option for clients and, while none are forced to embrace the custom, conditions are set to subtly encourage them to do so. Upon their entry in the restaurant, clients will walk toward one of the waiters who will naturally ask them whether they would like to take a drink before they start dinner, inviting them to seat at the bar or the terrace. Familiar clients may even receive a: “Hey Stéphane, what would you like to drink tonight?” already bringing them small bowls of peanuts and mixed raw vegetables.
Regular pre-dinner events such as dances or music from local troupes, organized at the restaurant’s terrace, reveal a powerful incitement to encourage clients to indulge in a few drinks. Yet in matter of incitement, the emulation of other clients and, most importantly, of European employees who respect this tradition themselves, is the most common and effective influencer. As expatriates, European employees dine together at the restaurant and socialize with clients. In fact, attending pre-dinner drinks and dinners is almost an obligation for a few employees such as the hospitality manager. Clients may find European staff members, including the two Directors, seating at the bar counter around 7:30pm or 8pm, engaging in conversation. They become the representatives of Le Zéphyr, talking about the resort’s history and stories, discussing their own experience of Africa and sharing pieces of advice regarding places worth seeing in the region. It is also the opportunity for clients to express their curiosity for the local culture and talking about their impression of the exotic landscapes seen during their excursions.

Pre-dinner drinks also reflects a certain image the resort intends to provide to its clients, that of people who take the time to enjoy the simple pleasure of talking to one another; it contributes to the intense people-oriented experience the resort intends to convey. Sometimes, discussions lengthen and the quick pre-dinner drink extends into an hour of deep conversation about life or simply of laughter. This special time is also the occasion for villa owners, a more restricted and privileged subgroup of clients, to meet with each other and strengthen their bonds as a small sub-community within the resort.
After the pre-dinner drinks, and after serving the dinner, the Room team does the dishwashing, cleans the place and sets the table for the next morning, getting ready for a new day.
Chapter 5 – The Security

The security team watches the domain 24 hours a day, every day of the week, all year round and is responsible for the security of the personnel and clients at the resort. It is composed of seven members who primarily work in pairs and rotate every 12 hours (diurnal shift from 5am, nocturnal shift from 5pm). During diurnal shifts, one guardian secures the main entrance, the other the employees’ gate. At night, the employees’ gate is closed; one guardian secures the main entrance, and the other makes regular rounds of the whole domain.

For security guards, waiting constitutes a large part of their working hours. In this regard, I must confess the security people were certainly the most enthusiastic interviewees I had. With the exception of nocturnal rounds, their time is spent at the security posts, near the two main entrances, where they keep track of comings and goings at the resort [See Picture 7]. Time, names, villas occupied, person visited, mean of locomotion, license plate number: all details are meticulously reported in a dedicated notebook. In the presence of an external visitor, they also ensure that they have a valid motive to enter the resort before escorting them to the reception desk.

In addition to their security remits, guardians are also in charge of maintaining the shift form (liste de présence), which keeps track of employees’ working hours. The arrival time (la levée) and departure time (la descente) are recorded by a guardian.
and approved by the employee via her signature. For tracking purposes, the document is then transferred to the reception desk at the end of each day.

Finally, the team undertakes few additional tasks. In particular, they assume basic front-desk responsibilities—e.g., welcoming new clients, carrying luggage to the villas and booking cabs when the reception is closed—as well as rudimentary maintenance duties when no member of the maintenance team is present on site, this is frequent at night and during the off-season—e.g., turning the power back on after a blackout or launching a water pump that has stopped.

Although no rule forbids them from doing so, and although their working activities would easily accommodate for it, guardians rarely eat a proper meal during their shift. Night workers dine before service; the others eat a solid breakfast and, should they get hungry during their shift, buy a little pack of peanuts or a fruit from one of the many itinerant vendors who pass by the resort. Guardians also prepare tea to kill time—green tea with peppermint and a lot of sugar, similar to that of the Moroccans. They try to keep this practice as discreet as possible however, especially during the day, by fear of appearing unprofessional in front of the management team: “it would not look very nice, you know.” For this reason, the tea, the aromatic herbs, the coal and the little metallic teapot are placed in an improvised hatch, only to be taken out during calm hours.

Even though night guardians like to stress that 1am to 3am is the crime hour, they confess that, except for a few fires caused by storms during the rainy season—one of which led to the complete burning down of a whole villa—no serious incidents have yet to happen at the resort. In fact, with the exception of a small baton, security
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guards remain unarmed. Nobody has ever been attacked, and the only thefts that occurred concerned employees' belongings or hotel material. Brief investigations proved that another employee was responsible for the felony, leading to his immediate termination. An experienced worker from the security team comments on the low level of incidents:

"In the region, we all know each other. If someone does something, others will tell. A robber or aggressor would quickly get identified and caught. "

Chapter 6 – The Laundry Room

Despite the name of the department, the five employees of the laundry room not only wash the resort’s towels and linens; they are also in charge of the cleaning of all the accommodations of Le Zéphyr, and certain common areas such as the reception.

On a typical workday, the team splits in three: four workers clean the accommodations in pairs while one stays at the laundry room. At 8 o’clock, the beginning of the workday, all employees meet at the laundry room. Together, they fold the fresh towels left in the dryers the previous day and start a few washes, waiting for most clients to awake, disposed to have their accommodation cleaned. Once the fresh towels and linens are prepared, the two pairs of housekeepers start their round of the villas while the remaining employee continues her work at the laundry room.

The person in the laundry room empties the washing machines, puts the washes in the drier, hangs out the linens, but mainly irons the clothes. Meanwhile, her four colleagues, including the team leader, clean the accommodations, collect the dirty linens, send them to the laundry room and replace them with fresh ones.

The reception produces a weekly schedule of arrivals and departures that helps the team leader defines the places that need particular attention. Occupied accommodations must be cleaned every day, unoccupied ones once per week during
the season and once per month during the rainy season; to-be-occupied villas or lofts also require a quick preparation – e.g., fresh towels, soaps and shampoo bottles. Depending on the occupancy status, number of clients in a villa and degree of disorder, cleaning an accommodation takes each pair between 45 minutes and two hours. After estimating the daily effort based on the reception schedule, the team leader splits the tasks, assigning villas to each pair.

Pairing-up has two advantages. First, it allows housekeepers to reduce the time spent in each accommodation, thereby minimizing inconvenience for clients. Second, and since the effort for each villa may vary significantly, teaming up helps hedge against the risk of one unlucky employee ending up with more work than others. Social effects seem to have little effect on the pairing, for the two colleagues are rarely in the same room together. Work seems to be done in silence, although the presence of clients in villas may hinder potential social habits; I did not extend my observations to the cleaning of unoccupied villas.

The Laundry Room team has not changed much over the last few years and the pairs are now well defined and fixed; in a standard configuration, the two most senior, experienced and efficient employees work together. The fastest duo can thereby take up extra work when there are an uneven number of places to clean, or when the other team lags behind:

"It's been like that for a long time now. Me and Claire, we are more faster... because not all people are very fast. [...] But when we are done, we can go help others."
The pairing up does not change, unless a new employee joins the department. In such a case, the team leader pairs up with the novice for one season in order to train her.

The cleaning of the villas responds to a well-defined procedure in which tasks are performed in a certain order; housekeepers first clean the toilets, move to the bathrooms where they change towels, and scrub the sinks and showers, then make the beds, sweep the floors and hand wash the dishes, if the clients prefer to cook in their villa rather than dine at the resort's restaurant. Finally, they mop the floor and bring the dirty linens to the laundry room before moving on to the next villa.

Clients may also request that their personal clothes be cleaned by the personnel of the laundry room; in such case, the clients hand in a form to a housekeeper who will take the clothes to the laundry room and bring the filled-in form to the reception for future billing.

Of all the villas, one is subject to a different treatment: villa 16, occupied by the two owners / Directors, is cleaned only once per week, upon their request. Only the leading housekeeper comes every day to make the bed, change the towels and empty the garbage. On the cleaning day however, all four housekeepers participate, so the task is completed in the fastest way possible.

In total, in peak periods, this can represent up to 120 towels to wash, 45 beds to make, and 37,670 m² of floor to clean up, in addition to dishwashing and private washes for clients. This can reveal a daunting task that can take much more than 8 hours for the five employees. In fact, it is not rare for them to stay until 7pm or 8pm.
when the resort is full, a challenge for these five young mothers who must split their time between work and family responsibilities. For this reason, housekeepers stay focused on their work to finish as early as possible; although allowed to take breaks whenever they want, they rarely unwind or eat before their service is over; and should a client offer them a cup of tea or coffee, they politely refuse and get back to their task.
Chapter 7 – The Shop & Wellness Area

One employee is in charge of both the shop and the wellness area. Although distinct on the surface, the two activities have several common points. For one thing, they are both complementary activities of the core resort operations; for another, their financial turnover is less dependent upon the number of clients than is that of other departments such as the restaurant. But more pragmatically, these two activities were grouped together because they do not each generate enough revenue to justify the employment of two full-time employees.

The remuneration of the beautician—i.e., the employee responsible for the spa and shop—differs slightly from other resort workers. Her compensation consists of a fixed salary plus a commission based on seasonal sales above minimum expected gross sales. This contractual difference translates into more self-control over her work hours:

"I'm flexible. I adapt [my schedule] based on my care sessions and this is why, sometimes... if I really worked non-stop one day and the next day I want to go to the village for an hour because I want to do some groceries, then I can do it, because [the director] gives me total freedom in the way I organize myself."

The beautician starts her day early, offering a one-hour gym class on the beach at 7:30 am for both clients and employees. Apart from that, most of her working time is
spent across three different locations: her office, the beach bungalow, the front of the shop and the back of the shop—used as a spa area.

She starts work at her office, adjunct to the reception, where she completes her administrative responsibilities before starting her beauty care activities, either at the beach bungalow or the shop backroom. As a beautician, she provides a range of care that can be organized into the following taxonomy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Massages</th>
<th>Relaxant</th>
<th>Amincissant</th>
<th>Ayurvedique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soins</td>
<td>Soin Après Soleil</td>
<td>Soin du Visage</td>
<td>Gommage Corporel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epilation</td>
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<td>Epilation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beauté des pieds et des mains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massages</td>
<td>Relaxing</td>
<td>Slimming</td>
<td>Ayurvedic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>After-Sun Care</td>
<td>Facial Care</td>
<td>Body Exfoliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waxing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Waxing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feet and Hands Beauty Care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maintaining an “atmosphere of serenity” is, she says, an integral part of the Wellness Area experience. The beach bungalow is designed to offer an atmosphere of communion with nature: customers say they enjoy the peaceful music of the sea and the warm breeze coming from the beach, gently stirring the white linens that serve as bungalow walls. The shop backroom, on the other hand, offers a more private and intimate environment, appropriate for beauty treatments such as depilation and masks. As pointed out by the beautician, establishing the right level of communication with the customer is central to the experience:

"[For] massages, at first, I won't start the conversation. I will just ask: 'are you comfortably positioned,' at the beginning and, later on in the massage, I'll say: 'does the pressure suit you?' but otherwise I try not to talk because it's a rather relaxing time; and if the person talks to me, then I'll talk, I'll answer questions. But, in my
studies, we've been taught to agree with the customer, and never really give your opinion because, you can't... uh... [enter in a political debate.] Some are looking for that, but it's not the goal."

In a context where conversations about social or cultural differences can quickly arise and may generate disagreement and tensions, the employee believes it is particularly important to maintain such a rule. The situation is however slightly different for beauty treatments: "when it's beauty cares like waxing or... I only have a few, but most of the time, it'll be people from around here, that I know well, and that's an occasion to talk a bit."

Since the salary of the beautician is partly variable, the promotion of her services is particularly important. First, a leaflet presenting the services of the Wellness Area is available at the reception and is placed in every villa upon arrival of new clients. She also introduces herself in a more personal way during pre-dinner drinks at the restaurant, when European employees socialize with clients. In addition, she offers a free 30-minute massage for any reservation of more than five nights. Finally, she advertises outside the resort, putting up posters in a few shops in the nearest town. However, the informal communication and word of mouth at the resort constitutes the largest contributors to her continuing activity.

The other important segment of her work is her responsibility at the resort's shop. The shop sells a large range of local items: local artists' statuettes, masks, paintings, bags, fabrics, necklaces, beauty products, juices and jams. Because the shop is maintained by the beautician, who is kept busy by her beauty treatments and
massage activities, it remains closed most of the time, unless a client expresses the desire to visit it.
Chapter 8 – The Gardens

Le Zéphyr possesses approximately 3 hectares of green space, and the 8 gardeners of the department pride themselves on maintaining what they regard as the prettiest park of all resorts on the coast. “For the moment, we retain the title of best garden of [region]. Despite the repeated attacks [from the competition], always, since the foundation of Le Zéphyr, we have the best gardens. This is what the clients who walk by tell us,” explains Simon, the team leader of the department [See Picture 8].

According to him, green areas are central to the spirit and standing of Le Zéphyr: “The first thing that attracts people when they enter the resort, well, it’s not the villas, [...] it’s the gardens. That’s the first thing they see.”

Green areas include the entrance (in front of the resort), the villas’ gardens, the common areas, the nursery, and the two vegetable patches [See Picture 1]. With the exception of the last, maintained by independent gardeners, they are under the responsibility of the gardens department, and such responsibility requires a well-oiled organization. The workday starts at 8am, with the sweeping of the paths followed by the watering of the plants. “This is how it’s done in the hotel industry, in general,” comments one of the gardeners. Then, they move to the maintenance of their sectors. The division of labor, based on a geographical split that cuts the resort in 5 long slices parallel to the sea, was defined by the team leader six years ago and has remained the same ever since; one worker is responsible for the entrance, three
are in charge of the three lines of villas—i.e., *Suites Océan*, *Suites Azure* and *Suite Jardin*—and three others take care of the hill and the palm grove, by far the largest sector. Finally, Simon, the team leader, remains unaffiliated to any sector and rotates to coordinate efforts and help members who need an extra hand. He also tours the domain with the Director General twice a week, in order to spot elements that need specific attention, plants that must be changed or added, etc. A large part of the green areas' current look is the result of these discussions, of which the key points are passed-on by Simon to the rest of his team, during the rest of the day.

When working on their sectors, gardeners remove roots, dead leaves branches and weeds from the flowerbeds, redraw the borders of the lawns and paths, loosen the soil, replace sick or dead plants, and trim hedges and bushes. In doing so, they use modern tools but also traditional ones such as the Kadu (or Kadjando) [see Picture 9], a type of rake primarily used by Jola people in rice fields.

Contrary to the personnel of other departments such as the Security or the Laundry Room, gardeners do respect the lunch break:

“We cannot stay up from 8am to 4pm without eating. Our work, you stay in the sun all day and you make a lot of physical efforts.”

They set up an informal subscription system among themselves, through which they raise money to buy rice. The starch is then complemented with a sauce using spices, chicken bones leftover from the resort’s kitchen, and vegetables given by the two independent market gardeners in charge of the organic patches:
"The vegetables, it's all from the patches. [...] The guys from the patches give to us, since they are like us. We are from the same ethnic group. They tell us it's not a problem."

A few of the gardeners rotate to cook the meal. The one cooking interrupts his work in the garden around noon and is replaced by the team leader. When the meal is ready, the seven other workers join him, between the two patches and the nursery, beyond the vegetation that delimits the resort's parking lot. There, a few tree trunks have been converted into benches that form a circle. They eat à la Sénégalaise—i.e., with their right hands or a spoon, directly from one large plate in the middle of the ground. When they don't eat quietly, listening to France Inter through a small radio that hangs on the branch of a nearby tree, the gardeners discuss work: what has been done in the morning, what remains to be done after the break, but also and perhaps more importantly, who does not pull his weight:

"[During lunches,] we talk about work. In these moments, the one who has a weakness on his side [i.e., sector], we talk to him. We criticize him. We tell him that we are not here for that. You have to be serious because nobody wants to be criticized one day."

Gardeners usually finish lunch with a short nap under the shade of the trees, lying down on makeshift beds: an old hammock, a few unfolded boxes placed on the ground or even a wheelbarrow. Only two more hours to go before they all go home!

Gardening is strongly affected by seasonal patterns, particularly in a country like Senegal, where the rainy season changes the gardeners’ work. The effect of the heavy rains in the region may be hard to picture for readers who never experienced such climate themselves. By way of illustration, a dead stick nailed in the
Casamancese ground in June may exhibit burgeoning branches in September—empirically tested with a wooden fence by the present writer. At the end of June, the gardeners therefore prepare the resort’s gardens by cutting most of the vegetation extremely short. In September, few weeks before the tourist season, they will trim all the bushes and hedges again, to welcome the first clients.

In 2012, the team replaced over 240 plants at the resort. Such an activity does not only require every day care from experienced hands, it also demands forward-looking attention so as to sustain a supply of new vegetation. The leader of the gardening team is in charge of this endeavor, with three supply solutions at his disposal: shoots from the nursery, exchanges with or gifts from other gardeners, and purchases. The nursery supports a large part of the replacement needs in flora at the resort. In May, the team starts to prepare the cuttings, planting them at the nursery, in recycled bottles, polystyrene boxes, pots, or directly in the ground, and watering them regularly until the beginning of the rainy season, when nature will perform its magic. From each given plant present at the resort, gardeners can grow up to 30 cuttings. In the last season however, the team did not manage to maintain the appropriate amount of plants at the nursery, as discussed by Simon:

"Last year, we did not have the time, you know, to do it, because we had a lot of jobs to do down [the hill]... the parcels, where we put new lawns and all. So, it took us so much time, so when we were done working on these parcels, it was too late for the nursery. That's why this year, our nursery completely declined."

If a plant is not in the nursery, Simon engages in discussions with other gardeners in surrounding hotels, which can result in trades or gifts:
“In general, when I see a plant at someone’s place, I tell him: ‘Well, I have my nursery, if you want, come see what is going on in my nursery and we do an exchange.’ If he tells me: ‘So, it’s no big deal. I can give [it to] you, as a friend, as a brother. And so, tomorrow, when I will [also be in] need, I will come to see you.’ This is how we proceed here.”

Gardeners all know each other in the nearby villages and Simon also has good gardening friends in Ziginchor, the regional capital. It may be the Senegalese culture of solidarity, coupled with the camaraderie of the profession, that play a role in supporting this informal trade. It has its limit though:

“If there is a large number of [plant] deaths, [...] then imperatively, the management team will give me money to find these plants. Because, when it’s above 10, I cannot go to someone to ask him for 10 plants. He will tell me: ‘You, you’re kidding me!’ ”

Although Simon has no direct budget, the General Manager can approve orders of 20, 50, or even a 100 plants. Last year for instance, the General Manager provided budget to buy a large quantity of palms, to replace the hedges that delineate the swimming-pool area. Such large orders are now rare. The cost of plants—normally defined by its typology, age, life duration, etc.—increased in recent years due to ‘the cost of life’, in Simon’s words. Furthermore, the recent difficult financial situation of the resort has led to severe budget restrictions.

As a result of the nursery’s decline, increased cost of plants and budget restrictions, not all dead plants could be replaced in 2013; only 140 plants were, according to Simon—a drop of almost 42% compared with the previous year. As a result, trade-offs had to be made as to which plants should be replaced, and in which sector. Villas’
gardens and common areas were privileged, to the detriment of the entrance, despite
its arguably being the most visible sign of prestige of Le Zéphyr for pedestrians who
walk by.
Chapter 9 – The Maintenance and Leisure Activities

The Maintenance and Leisure Activities department combines disparate activities and is undeniably the most heterogeneous and fragmented of all the resort's departments. Employees are dispersed widely throughout the resort, they do not share the same schedules, and their roles and responsibilities vary significantly.

Activities of the department may be presented under the following taxonomy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maintenance</th>
<th>Woodwork &amp; Iron</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boiserie &amp; Fer</td>
<td>Woodwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
<td>Iron</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Technic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electronique</td>
<td>Electronic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanique</td>
<td>Mechanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entretien de la Piscine</td>
<td>Swimming Pool Water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Loisirs</th>
<th>Leisure Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garde des Enfants</td>
<td>Children Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plage</td>
<td>Beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securite des Beigneurs</td>
<td>Beach Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports de Plages</td>
<td>Beach Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activites Natiques</td>
<td>Sea Activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.A. The Maintenance

Selected extracts from *To Do List, Saison 2013-2014* (maintenance):

“Every morning, check the air and water jets of the swimming pool as well as the 4 showers / Villa 6: Request a quote to change 4 air conditioners / no kitchen gas... / Villa 16: replace the two light bulbs above the mirrors in bathroom 3 / Fix 4x4 Charles / Villa 4: Repaint the wall above the bed in the ground floor bedroom / The light switch of the second floor terrace does not work / the cooker hood does not work (in position 2) / Villa 2: Change all curtains / Loft A: Re-varnish the parquet in the living-room / Impermeability issue on the terrace: thicken the surface with concrete.”
At the maintenance department, adaptability is an indispensable skill; problems within the maintenance team’s scope vary from hanging a painting and changing a lock on a door or batteries on a remote control, to treating all wooden surfaces and fixing a fridge, computer, water pump or wireless network. While the two main employees in this function each possess his own area of expertise, they must also be comfortable with a large array of problems in order to collectively respond to most of the maintenance needs of the resort.

One of the two workers is primarily responsible for the treatment of wood surfaces and iron elements. A large part of the resort’s buildings and furniture is made of wood: doors, parquets, ceilings, terraces, gates, beams, external lamps and sculptures, tables, chairs, parasols, benches, deckchairs, etc. In a region where the wintering (rainy season) may last up to four months and moths represent a permanent threat, all wood elements and surfaces must be regularly treated for waterproof quality and insect attacks. Similarly, iron requires regular treatment. Indeed, because the resort is located directly on the coast, it is subject to iron deterioration as a result of the sea air. Wood and iron treatments aside, the employee devotes the rest of his time repairing furniture; there is always something to fix at the resort, be it a warped gate, a broken window or damaged deckchairs.

The other worker focuses on mechanical maintenance, which includes water pumps, air conditioning systems, electricity generators, swimming pool system, fridges, washing machines, etc., and the troubleshooting of the wireless network and most electronics. The Technical Director also dirties his hands, and contributes to the mechanical and electronic maintenance at the resort. Finally an occasional worker is
in charge of the cleanliness of the swimming pool and the overall quality of the water.

Issues can arise from anywhere in the resort, and so does their reporting. First, technicians may identify issues on their own:

"As long as I am at the resort, and as I walk around, if I see something that is not normal, automatically, I do the... It's not a question of waiting. [...] At any time, it can be either me who saw it, or the boss, or a client, [...] automatically I intervene."

Clients and villa owners also occasionally report issues directly to technicians, easily recognizable by their blue uniform. However, technicians remain primarily back-office employees and as such, are not always well known to customers; this is why clients most frequently report issues at the reception desk. In such case, the reception team records comments on a maintenance list, stating the location, nature of the problem and level of emergency. Should an issue require urgent care, the reception staff may immediately contact one of the maintenance employees. Otherwise technicians, as well as the technical director, will take a look at the list when they pass reception, at least once per day.

The Technical Director also engages in a daily tour of the resort with the Manager General. The latter reports new issues that clients directly pointed out to him while the former updates him on the maintenance operations in progress. Following these daily tours, the Technical Director debriefs his team through a meeting, occasionally providing workers with a daily to-do-list.
9.B. The Leisure Activities

Of all the employees dedicated to leisure activities, the beach attendant is the only one present on site for the full season. He watches bathers, provides indications regarding swimming status, organizes beach activities—e.g., soccer and volleyball—and supervises aquatic activities upon clients’ requests, in particular the use of the catamaran. Another role of the beach attendant is to ensure that itinerant sellers do not accost clients too persistently.

Itinerant sellers are legion along the seashore and disregard the fact that many areas of the coast are in fact private beaches. Woman sellers, dressed in traditional clothes, usually sell fruits and sachets of peanuts that they carry in large flat wicker baskets, on top of their heads. Men are most often dressed in a more Western style and sell cheap African bracelets and necklaces as well as counterfeit sunglasses and watches. They walk along the shore, stepping toward each tourist, inviting them to take a look at their merchandise, sometimes quite intrusively. As a local, the beach attendant, by his simple presence, guarantees that itinerant sellers do not become too persistent or pushy with the resort’s clients.

Other workers in the leisure activities are employed only occasionally, to take care of clients’ children when families request such a service. They organize activities for children, including hide and seek, swimming pool games, drawing and crafting, bodysurfing, sand castle competitions, etc. They also ensure children are safe around the swimming pool and that they do not disturb other clients who are quietly sunbathing. Such services are not common in luxury hotels, and thus clients say they particularly appreciate having them at Le Zéphyr. As parents, they can enjoy
the company of their offspring during meals and evenings, but can spend some time relaxing without worrying about them during the rest of the day. For children, it is potentially an opportunity to meet and play with other kids, under the supervision of adults trained to organize activities adapted to their age. For clients who would like to spend a bit of time away from children, there is always someone there available to keep the children’s inquisitive nature directed at something else other than their parents.
Chapter 10 – The Reception

At Le Zéphyr, the Reception is more than a simple welcome desk; it is an organizational hub, “the bridge between the clients, the employees and the management team,” according to an intern working there.

The Reception is opened from 9am to 6pm. The pre-booking of accommodations as well as the reasonably small size of the resort justifies the absence of a permanent presence at the reception. But this schedule also reflects well the rhythm of life at the resort; indeed, there is not much activity going on before or after this time range and clients, for a large part, remain in their villas unless they are having breakfast or dinner at the restaurant.

Although there is officially only one receptionist, several other employees take charge of reception tasks. The reception desk is encased between Resort manager’s offices, located next to each other for convenience. European interns—assisting the management team—work at the reception desk, aside the receptionist; the Director, the hospitality manager and the beautician/shop manager have their offices just behind the reception’s counter. Office doors are always open so anybody may help with customers’ request—if there are several clients inquiring at the same time—or take the station in the receptionist’s absence. For this reason, the Reception is often
amalgamated with the Management Team, and the two terms are used interchangeably.

Like a standard reception, Reception is the front face of the resort. Therefore, the receptionist responds to various needs of the clients—e.g., orders cabs or massages, provides beach towels, exchanges CFA francs for euros, lends DVDs, helps plan an excursion, or contacts the maintenance staff. She also picks up new clients from the airport, and prepares their departure and luggage check-in. In addition to serving clients, she guides external visitors who request a day-pass at the swimming pool, book a table at the restaurant, or simply would like information about the resort (tour, visit of a villa, etc.).

In addition, the receptionist holds back office responsibilities. Although less obvious, these administrative duties are essential to the functioning of the hotel and are usually coordinated by the Management team; these responsibilities can be organized in two categories: (a) centralization of information and (b) centralization of resources.

(a) Centralization of Information: First, since they do the villa bookings, the receptionist manages the planning of arrivals and departures on which the workload of the restaurant, the laundry room, and the maintenance team is based. Second, they compile the clients' bills from all other departments—e.g., wellness area, shop, restaurant, and private washes by the laundry room team—to generate the final departure bill. Third, they collect the shift forms and keep track of employees' working hours, an indispensable piece of
information for employees who request days off. Fourth, they receive the resort’s correspondence, including résumés of prospective workers.

(b) Centralization of Resources: Reception is also in charge of most of the ordering at the resort: food and drinks for the restaurant, desk furniture, cleaning material and products, shampoos and soaps, etc. With the exception of restaurant orders, items are kept in a backroom behind the reception counter and require tracking and approval from the reception to be retrieved by other departments.

This administrative role confers significant power and responsibility on Reception, which explains the amalgamation with part of the management team duties. Furthermore, because both information and resources are centralized, the Reception plays a role of supervision and approval gate in direct connection with the Director, who is the key decision-maker of the day-to-day operations at the resort.
Chapter 11 – The Management Team

The resort is co-managed by the two Directors and founders, Charles, Director General (Directeur Gérant) and Marine, Director (Directrice). While they provide each department with a reasonably high degree of freedom in the way they work, the outcome of this work is subject to daily controls. Two managers support the directors in their task: the Hospitality Manager (Directrice d’hôtellerie) and the Technical Manager (Directeur Technique). While the Hospitality Manager may be seen as the right arm of the two Directors, the Technical Manager has a more precisely defined role, managing the Gardens, Maintenance and Security departments.

Charles, the Director General, holds both supervisory and representative roles. As a supervisor, he oversees the technical and catering operations, and coordinates the season opening and closure.

He tours the resort with the Technical Manager twice per week to be updated on the evolution of different issues, set priorities, and most importantly, guarantee that the resort espouses European luxury standards:

"I control everything because I have a European eye, which is a great asset here, since Senegalese do not possess a watchful eye. They rarely determine what’s... they do not have the sense of details and of what is pretty. [...] Last time, I realized gardeners didn’t remove the weeds between the slabs. [...] So yes, I make sure
the resort is perfectly maintained, especially during the tourist season, when everything ought to be absolutely perfect.

Similarly, the Director General holds a catering meeting with the Hospitality Manager and the two department leaders of the restaurant to be informed of issues such as breakdown of a refrigerator or urgent supply orders, and debrief them on the performance of the previous day: what went right and what could be improved.

As the legal representative of the resort, the Director General embodies the institution in front of a multitude of legal authorities (tax assessor, tourism assessor, land assessor, governors, prefect, sub-prefect, president of the rural council, etc.) who are not always from the Director General’s perspective, well meaning:

“ I’m representing the resort for [these legal authorities, including] all the cherry-pickers, those who try to extort money from Le Zéphyr. It takes the form of a variety of inspections, from hygiene to music... so my role is to protect Le Zéphyr against the consequences of these extortions. And so, that’s a huge responsibility over my head. [...] I’d say, as soon as someone wants to attack Le Zéphyr, harm Le Zéphyr, I’m the fuse. Here in Africa, it also means trying to avoid being thrown into jail. A few years ago, I managed to avoid being thrown into jail for fiscal reasons. The charges proved to be completely groundless but I had to go to Dakar under the protection of the Belgian ambassador in order to negotiate with fiscal authorities until they recognized that there was nothing illegal going on. And in theory, I should have been thrown into jail in Ziginchor immediately. ”

In addition to responding to the demands of legal representatives, Charles must cope with other authorities beyond the law:
“For instance, the political branch of the MFDC [Movement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance, Casamancese independence fighters] comes and asks us [...] to pay the... how to say... the revolutionary tax. So in these situations, I also deal with their request and make sure that their contribution requests are completely reasonable and proportionate to... uh... the difficulties that the Casamancese touristic sector faces today. [...] We live in a very peculiar region, and if you want to survive here, you must adapt, like a chameleon, you must adapt to the landscape and the mores. ”

The Director, Marine, focuses most of her time on the accounting and the day-to-day finances of the resort including prospecting for new clients and the controlling service quality. She is responsible for the payment of employees, the clients' bills, suppliers' payment, the accounting records and the business report for each villa owner's financial inputs and outputs. She also oversees the supply of most departments:

“Order requests go to my desk for approval [...] Everything requires approval. Often, you need to verify why they order because they like to... uh... they order in large quantities, so you still need to double-check. ”

She also responds to information and quote requests from prospective clients. In doing so, she puts considerable effort into conveying what she calls the “spirit of the resort”, trying to find the right balance between professionalism and high standards on one side, and a personal, warm and familial touch on the other. Information requests can be subject to long email exchanges:
“[Prospective clients] ask additional questions, ask for reservations, extra services, what they can see here... honestly, it's a bit like the role of a tourism agency. I thought this is what an agency does, and that they would be the ones answering these questions but it's not the case: everything falls in our hands. All these questions... about excursions, security, the regions, you know, we end up dealing with them."

Finally, Marine supervises Reception, a strategic department that coordinates many of the activities at the resort. Because her office is just behind Reception, she may overhear or participate in conversations with clients, trying to see that their concerns are addressed promptly, in line with her understanding of the reputation of the hotel.
PART II

Cultural Expression, Power and Authority:
Group Dynamics at the Resort
Chapter 12 – One Workplace, Two Job Markets

While the structure of the organization -- the departments with their respective tasks -- provides an adequate framework to describe the resort’s activities, it is less relevant when describing the group dynamics among employees. In this respect, the contractual relations that link individuals to the institution constitute a better tool. Interestingly enough, this piece of information is also displayed in the official organizational chart of Le Zéphyr, thereby reinforcing the idea that contractual relations are central in apprehending the status of each member at the hotel.

Intimately linked to the contractual relation is the distinction between locals and expatriates. Although not represented in the organizational chart, this distinction is in the mind of every member of the community since the two groups experience extremely different contractual conditions -- despite sharing similar contract categories. A conversation I had with a local worker about employee meetings--during which employee representatives invite the staff to discuss working conditions in order to formulate requests to the Director General--illuminates well the distinction between Senegalese and European employees:

"[Stéphane:] And who attend these meetings?
[Employee:] Everybody. All employees are allowed.
[Stéphane:] So Charlotte [the beautician, French] comes too?"
5-Star (By Local Norms): Group Dynamics in Luxury Sub-Saharan Resort

[Stéphane:] So, she is part of the management team?
[Employee:] No. I mean... it depends, you know.
[Stéphane:] Ok. And so Amidou [Technical Manager, a local] doesn’t attend cause he’s part of the management team too, right?
[Employee:] No. He attends. These meetings, it is for the staff. So Amidou, he attends. ”

From this dialog, one understands that many locals interpret ‘staff’ as Senegalese and ‘Management Team’ as Europeans, regardless of one’s position in the official hierarchy. Beyond any semantic debate, the remark of the employee illustrates an important characteristic of the resort’s labor force: although locals and expatriates work in the same environment, they compete in distinct employment markets, with specific economic advantages and working conditions. Based on the above observations, one may use the following taxonomy, commonly—and tacitly—used by employees and the management team, to analyze the various contractual arrangements in place at the resort:

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<tr>
<th>Employés Européens</th>
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<tr>
<td>Locaux</td>
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<th>European Employees</th>
<th>Full-Time Employees</th>
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<tr>
<td>Locals</td>
<td>Full-Time Employees</td>
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<td>Interns</td>
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12.A. European Employees

The two Directors hire Europeans for positions which they say qualified locals cannot easily be found—e.g., managerial positions, Head Chief, beautician/masseuse. In addition to their formal qualifications, European employees are also thought by
the Directors to be valuable for their cultural proximity to clients, a specificity that allows them to anticipate customers' need with much more ease than do locals.

They are recruited by headhunters or directly via job postings in French and Belgian management or hospitality schools. Attracted by the exotic location and the opportunity to gain experience in a luxury hotel, they usually intend to go back to Europe after a few years. They commit to work at the resort for at least two seasons when signing their contract and rarely stay longer than three or four.

Several reasons may help explain this phenomenon. First, opportunities for career advancements are non-existent at the resort. The organization is small, with only a few managerial positions, and the nature of the activity, as well as the difficult economic conditions of the tourism sector in the region, does not allow for much business expansion in the foreseeable future. An individual hired as hospitality manager can not expect any career advancement, since no position is available above his or her own except that of Director and Director General, historically occupied by the two founders.

Second, the common leisure activities that shape the western non-professional life—e.g., cinemas, shopping centers, sport clubs—are absent. Once the novelty of the Senegalese and expatriate way of life has worn-off, European employees begin to miss their own western life. This is well summarized by one European staff member:

"You need to keep in mind that the difference between their lifestyle and ours is so huge that there are things that are impossible to understand for them [...]. How many times did they tell us, it was at the beginning: "Oh, come with us to Ziginchor
5-Star (By Local Norms): Group Dynamics in Luxury Sub-Saharan Resort

[largest city of the region]. There are beautiful shops there! And we tell ourselves ‘Wow, we’re going to Ziginchor, we’re going shopping like we do in Europe,’ but in fact, the beautiful shops, this is exactly the same thing as the small stuff we have here in the nearby village. ”

Finally, a job in this region often requires one to put their personal life on hold, a situation that cannot be sustained too long. Most European employees are young working people with generally fewer attachments, family-wise, than senior professionals. Yet, for many of them, the separation from parents and friends is difficult to live with over an extended period of time. Furthermore, finding a partner can also become challenging, for the cultural and economic gap with locals worries certain Europeans who fear being involved in an unbalanced or even insincere relationship. Marine expands on the effect of distance on personal bonds:

“Private life is especially hard. And so, people leave this place mainly because of their private life. […] Look at Charlotte or Eileen. Charlotte, she doesn’t have a boyfriend and she won’t find one here, because she doesn’t want to be with a Senegalese. Eileen, she has a boyfriend in Europe, but it’ll be extremely hard for her to handle it. One year maybe but... so one day she’ll say ‘I let him go and I stay longer’ or ‘I need to leave the resort otherwise I’ll lose him.’ And the people who come without a partner, they think ‘I need to come back to Europe because the clock is ticking and I need a partner. I want a wife. I want children.’ That’s it: time passes.”

The fact that Europeans plan to go back to their home country—or at least, a western country—is not without implications on their contractual status. To attract them, the resort must offer them compensations that are competitive with those available on
the European employment market, so they may put money aside to prepare for their return. In addition, the resort must provide living conditions that facilitate move-in and move-out, so employees feel that their decision to accept an offer does not tie their hands, long-term. For this reason, Charles and Marine decided to offer expatriate employees room and board throughout touristic season. Most of them live in a small apartment at the resort and eat at the restaurant, at their own tables, aside clients.

Salaries for European employees at Le Zéphyr average £1,350 per month (~$1,885) and range from £650 (~$910) to £2,000 (~$2,790) per month, including the remuneration of the two Directors and founders. The lowest of these salaries are significantly below the SMIC (minimum salary in France), at £1,445 (~$2,020), or the average minimum salary in Belgium (fixed by collective employment agreements per industry), at £1,500 (~$2,095). Nonetheless, Charles believes that the salaries at the resort remain competitive, especially because expatriates receive ‘room and board,’ which allows them to put most of their salary aside as savings:

"We want our Europeans to earn more in net value at the end of the month than what they would earn in Europe, after deducting the housing, transport, food costs, et cetera. [...] Their living here allows them to earn... uh... at the end of 8 months [touristic season], for instance, someone making £1,000 [per month], puts aside £8,000. And, in the end, given the starting salary in Europe, well, you know: who puts £8,000 net aside?"

Implicit to these comments is the notion of job market in which European employees compete. For Charles, the best way to attract qualified expatriates is to offer a
position as advantageous to what they could find in their own country. The need to remain competitive compared with European job offers seems to legitimize in the directors' eyes both the salary and non-financial benefits Europeans receive as expatriates at the resort. This same economic reasoning, however, seems less favorable to locals, whose contractual conditions contrast sharply with those of French and Belgian employees.

12.B. Local Staff

To better understand the limited power locals have in contractual negotiations, one must gain a basic grasp of the Senegalese employment market, nationally, but also specifically in the tourist sector.

The Secretary General of the Chamber of Economy, Industry and Agriculture of Ziginchor estimated the unemployment rate of young people to be between 60% and 80% in the region in 2011.\(^1\) According to a study from the World Bank published in 2007, the informal sector generates approximately 97% of job creations in Senegal (World Bank, 2007). Among other things, work in the informal sector is characterized by an ease of entry, the use of simple techniques and quickly accessible resources, a limited number of workers, a narrow scale of operations and an absence of regulation and formal contracts. In Senegal, agriculture, fishing, small groceries and crafts largely count as informal activities. They may be managed at the individual and family level (e.g., small groceries), or at the community and village level (e.g., rice culture and fishing).

While these activities represent the only source of revenue for a large part of the population, they also constitute a salary complement for numerous employees in the formal sector, who pursue informal activities aside of their formal job. For instance, in Casamance, a region essentially populated by Jola, rice culture is a predominant informal activity; it plays a central role in the local economy and employs, on and off, a large majority of the population. In this regard, many local employees of Le Zéphyr labor in the paddy fields when the resort is closed, during the rainy season.

It is also important to note that, in Senegal, a salary not only serves the worker who earned it but also supports nuclear and non-nuclear family members. Any money earned beyond subsistence needs is customarily shared with relatives. In general, it is used as ‘pension’ for the previous generation (i.e., parents), who rarely possesses any savings and would have to serve in rice fields or other traditional labor work until they die unless they receive financial support from their active offspring. The extra money may also be used to support other family members who do not have a job, or as school grants for brothers and sisters, or cousins and nephews. Sharing your earnings with the family is a norm and the social pressure to conform to it seems to me to be particularly high. In this context, the person who has the capacity to work, that is, someone in good physical condition who has finished his studies, should do so, at any cost.

For the most part, however, jobs in the informal sector remain unstable and highly physical, and also offer meager revenues in contrast to the formal sector. A local employee of Le Zéphyr working at the restaurant comments:
"The work [at the resort], for me, you know, personally... this work is a game for me. It's a bit like having fun. Personally, I say that it's not real work. Someone who works in the paddy field from 8am to 4pm, plow the soil, with his feet in the water and the heat on his head... when you talk about work, that's what real work is. [Here at the resort,] it's nothing. You're having fun, and it's better paid too!"

The numerous advantages of the tourism sector apparently lead many local job seekers to covet positions in hotels and restaurants. From a status perspective, the industry entails a certain prestige that traditional labor jobs such as rice culture do not possess. Beyond whatever glamorous appeal and agreeable work environment it may hold for locals, the sector is regulated by official contracts as well as a salary scale—among the most generous of all formal industries—negotiated nationally by collective employment agreements, and published and enforced by public authorities. Additionally, it includes full year employment positions, a characteristic particularly sought for in a country where the economic activity is strongly influenced by seasonality—i.e., rainy season runs from mid-June to end of September. The tourist industry also opens the door to potential career opportunities or, at least, the possibility of salary increases over time. Finally, a majority of hotels are managed by Europeans who are, according to those I spoke with, more reliable than local employers with regard to timely salary payments.

This attractiveness of hotels and restaurants provokes intense competition among locals to enter the sector. Positions are limited and qualifications—e.g., degree in hospitality and past experience—are not sufficient to guarantee a job. The demand for those jobs is much higher than the supply. As noted by Marine, the Director: "We
have a huge advantage and they have a huge disadvantage: there are no jobs [in the country].”

Every season, Le Zéphyr receives numerous applications from job candidates -- by email, mail, or even brought in person to the reception desk. In evaluating résumés, managers look at past experience together with appropriate training. In many cases, however, local traditions complement a more formal recruiting process, as explained by Charles:

“...[In the region], when you retire --it has not happened to us yet but it will sooner or later-- you present your eldest son to take over your job. And this is something that [a colleague] already experienced several times [at his hotel], and in most cases it goes very well. It goes very well because the son was educated with the idea that he was going to succeed his father and that he has to be trustworthy [...]. Why am I telling you this? Because we have employees who introduce members of their family to us... and there are people, when they present someone to us, we know that they are reliable. And there are employees, when they present someone to us, we know they are absolutely not reliable, because they don't understand, and they try to push forward someone who doesn't have the qualifications at all [...]. ”

Applying to a 5-Star resort may be uncomfortable for some applicants. Solène, who assists in the recruiting process, noted: “We had extremely shy candidates; there’s one... we couldn't hear her because she was whispering, by fear and nervousness.”

For Marine, it is important she says to leave a “positive image” of the resort to applicants. Each rejection requires an email or a phone call to explain the decision, and sometimes provide some form of guidance, as explained by Solène:
"Last time, Ziginchor's labor inspector supported an application. It was the application of a single mother who didn't have the Bac [high school degree] and seemed very introverted. Charles took the time to tell her what she should do, that she should first apply to less 'prestigious' hotels. He gave her the names of some of his colleagues to whom she could send her Résumé, build more work experience through internships, because she had no experience. So he told her: 'start with an internship in that place, and then another one in this place, and that with your various certificates of practical training, you may be able to compensate for your lack of schooling.' [...] He really took the time to listen to her, advise her, and then called back the labor inspector to explain what were the basic requirements at the resort."

Following hiring, career evolution is primarily based on changes of contract. New recruits start as interns for a season; if they are seen by managers and their team leader as performing well, and if positions are available, they continue the following season under the status of daily workers. They then can ask for a seasonal contract and eventually a full-time contract.

With unemployment being so high and professional experience so important to build a solid résumé, Senegalese interns are willing to work at the resort for free. Yet, they receive a small compensation (CFA30,000 to CFA40,000 per month, equivalent to $63 to $83) to find an accommodation nearby. In exchange for their labor, they receive a certificate of practical training from a 5-Star hotel which, in Charles’ words, “allows them to easily find a job somewhere else, at least when the market was expanding, which has unfortunately not been the case over the last two years.”
Daily workers may work for a full six-month period or only temporarily, depending on needs, but are always paid on a monthly basis in order to facilitate the accounting work. The resort has little to no obligations toward them and may interrupt the contractual relationship at any time; the salary is low (CFA70,000, approximately $147/month) but still advantageous compared with informal labor jobs available in the region. On this matter, Charles says:

" [The salary] is acceptable and allows us to recruit easily, even though I'm the first one to say that, well, it's really a minimum today. The cost of living increased very significantly [...] these last few years, especially natural gas... sugar is very expensive too. So in the end, [daily workers] can live with [their salary] but I'm absolutely convinced that they cannot save money to prepare for the wintering [off-season], and that they have to work in the paddy fields too. "

Seasonal workers (by far the largest group, accounting for approximately 47% of employees) have a contractual arrangement that guarantees work over a six-month period (from November to April), automatic access to government-provided social security, and an extra paid month.

Finally, full-time staff (roughly 30% of employees) is guaranteed employment all year long, with one holiday month—taken during the off-season—and termination compensation in case of a layoff. Their salary ranges from CFA120,040 per month ($255) for a Gardener to CFA350,000 per month ($740) for a technical manager with more than 5 years of service.
Overall, local wages remain significantly inferior to those paid to Europeans. At Le Zéphyr, the ratio of average local fulltime salary to average European salary is 1:5.5, and the highest local salary is 22% lower than the lowest expatriate salary. In essence, the average local salary does offer modest living in Senegal while European salaries guarantee a return to Europe with savings in hand. According to Marine, this gap although hugely significant, is never mentioned in locals' requests about higher compensations. The situation does not create tensions between the two groups, she says, because Senegalese do not compare their financial situation with that of their European colleagues:

"In fact, they live in their world, and they say 'ok, my salary should be that much,' and they don't really... sure, they will go see what a person holding an equivalent position earns in this hotel, that hotel, and compare with other locals [...] but I think they know they are paid well here."

My discussions with local employees seem to suggest that they actually have little knowledge of the salary of their peers in other workplaces. People in the Room department, for instance, did not know how much waiters and maître d'hôtels in the other resorts of the coast were paid—although the institutions are located only a few miles away from each others, and that the employees of these resorts most likely live in the same villages. Similarly, Simon, garden leader and employee representative at the resort, also mentioned that he did not know how much were gardeners earning in other workplaces, although he routinely interacts with other gardeners working elsewhere when engaged in plant exchanges.
My field experience suggests that most staff members remain relatively secretive about their wages, even with colleagues from their own team. Furthermore, department leaders, who take part in the discussions about contract changes (e.g., from intern to daily, daily to seasonal, and seasonal to full time) only know about the salary of the staff in their own department. Occasionally, however, some employees reveal their salary to each other. The bartender, who began his sixth season in 2013-2014, upon finding out that the deputy of the maître d'hôtel, younger and hired only at the beginning of the season, earned more than him, noted: "It's not my problem. I don't care, really. It's his luck."

Overall, my interviews with local informants seem to suggest that they may not be aware of the extent of the gap between their salary and that of Europeans, although one may easily speculate that they are aware it exists. In this regard, Marine mentioned a story particularly relevant to the topic:

"Amidou [i.e., technical manager] found out, one way or another, that we were paying an accommodation to Ansoumane [i.e., Head Chief and European expatriate], so he came to us and said: 'well, I'm the technical manager, I believe that the senior technical manager should have an accommodation at the resort,' and that's true because you need to be present if there is an incident. So we said 'no problem. We will pay your accommodation too.'"

Because there was no employee accommodation available at Le Zéphyr at that time, Charles and Marine agreed to pay the rent of the house already occupied by Amidou and his family, outside of the resort. According to Marine, the outcome of this discussion satisfied the employee, although it did not solve the issue of distance from
the workplace. One may thereby infer that the problem for the employee was the inequality of treatment he felt he received than the functional convenience of living closer to the resort.

Local employees also have a few other financial benefits aside from their salary. Those who are not fed by the resort—i.e., all employees except those of the restaurant—receive a financial compensation for their lunch *prime repas* and all are granted a transportation benefit *prime de transport*. Although these are small sums—the transportation benefit is insufficient to pay for a daily cab (there is no public transport), even from the nearest village, two or tree miles away—it was regularly mentioned as job advantages by local employees during my interviews. Finally, clients may tip the overall service of the resort in a common pot located at the reception. The sum, to which is added an extra bonus by the Directors, is shared across departments at the end of the season and corresponds. For many employees, this end-of-season bonus is equivalent to half a month of salary.

Job continuation from season to season is not automatic. The decision to renew a seasonal contract is in the directors' hands, with advisory consultation from the concerned department leader. The law requires the resort to rehire the same seasonal workers should the position they held in the prior season still exist. Yet exceptions can be made and employees who demonstrated, in the managers' eyes, a lack of motivation and investment in their work may see their contract not renewed the following season. Charles and Marine—respectively—share their thoughts:

"Today, we have employees who are so competent, and we are so attached to them, and vice versa, that in the end, the only
employees I do not take on again the following season are employees who really showed themselves unworthy, who didn't get things done, who messed around [...]. As soon as you have a disruptive employee, it can [disorganize a whole department]."

"When someone is not good, we cannot decently keep him. But when someone is not good, he doesn't find it out on the day when we tell him: 'You won't come back.' We already had several conversations with this person. In Belgium, you need documents and all, but here [...] it's very easy to get rid of someone. But it's very rare that we get rid of someone after a season because they put a lot of effort during their first season. It is only when they come for their second or third season that their true personality...

'Yeah that's ok. People love me here' ...that their true personality comes out and that we realize that they'd rather hide than work."

Although the management team seems to me to be rather lenient and historical data suggests that most employees are rehired in subsequent seasons, the risk of not being taken on the following year is always present. This possibility exposes employees to a form of vulnerability that may weigh on their mind, as expressed by one of the seasonal workers:

"I have been here almost 5 or 6 years. When you finish a season, you're not sure that the following year, you'll be rehired. It creates uncertainty. You know, it's a problem. As soon as the season is over, you stay six months without working, and then you're not sure you'll work again."

Unfortunately, however, the current financial situation of the resort pressures managers to consider more layoffs in the near future. Charles says he finds it difficult to offer raises, salary upgrades or new full time contracts:
“Had I known that the touristic boom that occurred as a result of my project, I was the first big investor on the coast in 15 years, [...] was not going to last beyond 2007, 2008, I would have been more careful in my full-time contract commitments. Because the problem today... uh... [my fellow resort owners and I], we will meet [in few weeks] and we will have to take measures aiming at reducing the staff. And inevitably, it will be harder with full-time contracts than with seasonal contracts.

12.C. Labor Relations with Locals

As explained in the previous section, locals have little negotiating power to define their contractual relationship with the resort. The official salary scale regulated by the Senegalese work authorities provides something of a ‘shield’ for locals, introducing a system of salary grades for every profession in the industry. While this model is particularly effective to guarantee a minimum salary, it is less so to secure pay raises and career advancements. According to this scheme, employees’ advancement is based on years of experience and job scope. In reality, it ends up largely depending upon the appreciation of the employer, an opinion strongly affected by the financial situation of the business.

At Le Zéphyr, upgrades to higher work categories have been frozen for several years due to the downturn in tourism, a message that many locals do not believe. They see and emphasize the efforts they make and the number of clients still visiting and spending money at the resort. This is well illustrated by a few remarks collected from employees of different departments:

“Every year, they tell us ‘it doesn’t work, it doesn’t work.’ Honestly, we don’t understand, you know. Even, they take us back,
we work; we cannot work each year and it doesn’t work. [...] if the person who pays you, he says ‘it doesn’t work, it doesn’t work’ how do you want the employee to be motivated. [...] I’m not comfortable with my work, you know. I’m thinking ‘Maybe I don’t make enough effort... the clients they are not satisfied. They don’t come back.’ [...] You shouldn’t lie to people, you need to give trust to motivate them. [...] Honestly, since I’m here [...] the curve goes up, every year we have a lot of clients. [...] I’m here the whole season. I see. [...] The bottles of wine, the alcohols, the cocktails, the plates: it’s a lot of money. [...] Can you imagine how many bottles of wine we sell in a year? [...] All that, it’s not free! No, personally, I don’t believe all that. And it’s everybody who thinks that. If [other employees] tell you otherwise, it’s just to be nice. ”

“ We welcome clients in their villas. You know. How much it costs for clients who come here at Le Zéphyr, did you ask them? It’s really expensive. ”

“ When you suggest [to the Director General] to raise salaries, he tells you: [...] ‘You, you know well that the world faces a crisis, and you, you ask for salary raises!’ [...] what I want to tell you, honestly... the personnel see the clients coming and going. The personnel see the clients coming, every day. You saw it too. Last year we still had a lot of clients here. People saw the clients, they saw the efforts the personnel made [...]. Given where we are today, we deserve a raise because the hotel is roughly 85% full. [...] You, you know what [a villa owner] pays for the maintenance of the house. [...] Why does he give that money? It’s part of the wage for the personnel! ”

The notion of effort mentioned by employees refers to the significant overtime that most of them put in during seasonal peaks. While extra days worked during peaks
are retrieved later during more calm periods, extra hours are neither recovered nor paid for. In this light, the impossibility to move to higher categories of the salary grid may be perceived as an absence of recognition for the sacrifice and hard labor done on their part.

Because employee representatives do not manage to obtain salary raises, a few employees do not hesitate to bypass the standard process to negotiate directly with the Director General:

"I talked to Solène, Solène talked to Charles, and then I came here and I met him. [...] He liked the way I presented the issue. He told me he needed to think about it. It's not an arm wrestling contest, you know. He thought about it, he came to me: 'yes, I'll make an effort... CFA 5,000 [$10.6].' It's not huge but he made a gesture, I can't deny. It's a sign of recognition; I appreciated it."

As noted, local employees remain rather secretive of their salary; privately negotiated raises do not go public within the organization. For this reason, discrete individual requests increase the likelihood of a favorable outcome.

Another subject of frustration for certain local employees is the little amount of training they receive:

"I never went to a training to increase my experience in [my field]. [...] Sometimes, in other hotels, they are sent to Europe to follow a training to know more, know more than that. [...] How can I become a manager one day? [...] Every year, I'm being used here, utilized, and there is no evolution."
On the management team side, training is a sensitive topic. Because a well-trained and experienced workforce is hard to find in the country, investing in employee training potentially exposes employers to intensive poaching, resulting in their view in a "double cost:" The training and then the departure of a good employee.

According to managers, training raises a serious retention threat because loyalty is, they say, extremely rare. Their view is based on a few disappointments they had in the past, the most recent being a local kitchen Sous-Chef who worked at the resort for several years, and was paid for training in Senegal and Europe, in order to be promoted to the role of Head-Chief. In the past, the turnover of Head Chiefs, all expatriates, was high. The management team saw in a well-trained local Head Chief an opportunity to bring more stability at the head of the kitchen. However, the employee, after several trainings, decided to work in Dakar where he was able to secure a higher salary. Marine reflects on this experience:

"[He] left for money, because he found a job in Dakar, and honestly in this case, money, [any local] would have left. To them, it is the most important thing. Tomorrow, someone offers them CFA5,000 more [$10.6], they will leave."

In this respect, training in Europe raises even more concerns for the management team, as expressed by Charles:

"I had many disappointments in the past, although I sent employees who had been working for us for many years. I first sent them for training in Dakar. And it went very well [...], but then I had the bad idea to send them to Europe, and that was really a bad idea. They were very well trained but, there's nothing you can do about it, the cultural shock is such that they come back arrogant,"
they come back very disturbed by what they have seen in Europe and uh... well that's it, I had resignations. Resignations from people who really betrayed me, there's no other word for it."

Local employees who get trained in Europe are frontally exposed to the problems of the double job market. They get to experience what it means to work as a European and realize that Europeans work in a different environment, another league where salaries are higher and working conditions more favorable than those in Senegal.

Questioned on the resignations of employees sent for training in Europe, a local staff member commented:

"What do they find [in Europe]? The work that they do over there, it's different; because they work twice more here than they do in Europe. In Europe, they respect the rights of the employee [...] but here, they don't."

Training, as well as salary raises and working conditions, are addressed by Le Zéphyr' local staff and the employers—i.e., the two directors—during work council meetings. These negotiations respect the conventions defined by Senegalese’ labor law. Two employees are elected every two years to represent the personnel. At the beginning of the season, employees meet among themselves to express their 'claims' (doléances) to their representatives who then defend them during a meeting with the Director General. "The most frequent [request] is money because," a local employee explains, "the cost of living here, it becomes harder and harder so people cannot accept just a miserable salary, given the effort they make." Yet, cross-analyzing the above statement with those made by members of the management team, a
noticeable gap in the perceptions of is apparent. For instance, the Director General mentioned:

"With the exception of a recent augmentation on the wages of daily workers, I do not receive any claim for salary raises these days, because financially it’s an extremely tough period and [employees] know I could not give a positive answer to such requests. [...] They know the effort I make, and how much it costs to me financially."

To explain the discrepancy between these two views, the most reasonable hypothesis I believe is that employees and their representatives have kept their salary complaints quiet in recent years and instead, focused on discussions regarding working conditions which are more likely to be accepted by management. These include such matters as repainting the staff bathroom, changing the shower boiler, fixing the lockers, etc. Locals, aware of their limited bargaining power, may restrain their requests. This may give management the impression of appeasement, as illustrated by Charles comment:

"We are lucky enough to have a social climate that is very positive. [...] The dialog is constructive... which was not the case few years ago... because there is a mutual respect and because, somehow, I make concessions, and on their side, they are reasonable in their claims. [...] What they like is that sometimes, I notice things [that could be improved] [...] and there are requests that they have and that I anticipated, so they see that we care [for their working conditions]. This is more a dialog on what’s possible, and what’s not."

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Yet, despite the gap of perception, it is fair to point out that, after 10 years in business, the resort has never experienced an employee strike, a practice, according to Charles, relatively common in the country.
Chapter 13 – Expression of Local Culture at the Workplace: The Example of Animist Beliefs

“During the construction [of the resort], I was told that we could not start the work if [the employees] had a bad feeling about it. [One] had prophetic dreams at night and we had to postpone the construction several times because she felt that it was not the right day to start. And I learned to respect these cultural differences, really different from the kind of situations I had to manage in Belgic, and I now very much enjoy dealing with these.” (Charles)

Another reason that may help explain the relatively positive labor climate at the resort is the apparent respect that the management team shows to Casamancese culture, a respect well reflected by organizational practices. In this regard, manifestations of religious beliefs represent an excellent example.

Spirituality takes a preponderant role in the everyday life of Jola, the main ethnic group of Casamance (Balonon-Rosen, 2013). Although most of the population is Muslim or Catholic, animism remains the basis of every Jola’s spirituality. According to their beliefs, natural elements—human, animal, plant, or mineral—have a vital force that is part of a larger whole. Locals honor many divinities and protective spirits—e.g., those of the earth, of their village, of their house, of their ancestral line. They dedicate ritual ceremonies to these holy entities, ceremonies that entail prayers, offerings and sacrifices often supervised by a marabout. Jola also
worship fetishes, objects with beneficial powers that represent a shield against various forms of threat, accident, decease, malediction, death, etc.

This dimension of the local culture is present at the resort. For example, Le Zéphyr has its own fetish, located among three large palm trees in the garden of a villa. During the construction of the resort, workers mentioned that these three trees were the recipients of spirits; they requested that the trees remain untouched and that there be regular rites to ensure spirits' clemency. Two of these three palm trees are now part of the garden of a villa in front of which rites are performed every year—a ceremony dedicated to the fetish [See Picture 10]. All employees at the resort and also curious clients attend the event and gather around one of the palm trees—the base of which is considered the fetish altar. A Marabou recites prayers and invocations, offers alcohol to the spirits—e.g., wine, whiskey, pastis—by spilling the content of a few bottles on the altar and sacrifices an animal—usually a chicken—by slitting its throat and bleeding it to death—this part may be performed prior to the public ceremony, to avoid any negative reactions from the clients attending. The community then eats the animal and leaves a few bones on the altar as a sign of recognition for the spirits.

These rites seemingly have a cathartic effect on the organization. Because of the tough financial situation and recent setbacks faced by the resort, employees requested additional sacrifices this year, as explained by Charles:

"They came to me at the beginning of the season and told me there was too much bad luck happening at the resort. The boss had a stroke in Europe this summer, we had a fire at Villa 13 two years
ago, and now another one at Villa 2 and so, they considered that we needed to plan a larger sacrifice this year. [...] We did the traditional chicken sacrifice, but we killed two this time. To these, we added the sacrifice of a cow... it was the first time that we were doing that at Le Zéphyr; we sacrificed a cow following animist practices ...and we sacrificed a sheep too. And [employees] were really relieved and several of them told me... and I can tell you that I feel the same, and Marine does too ...since the sacrifices, we have the feeling that a very strong serenity prevails at the resort [...]. You may believe it, you may not, but the fact that we carefully respect their beliefs, the personnel are really grateful for that. 

Sacrifices, according to Charles, also strengthen bonds of the employee community by "transcending cultural differences:"

" [The sacrifice of the sheep] was originally a Muslim sacrifice, but I had it converted into an inter-religious sacrifice and so we all gathered in the garden of our villa [i.e., the villa of the directors], and we prayed all together, Catholics and Muslims. [...] "

The expression of the animist culture in the organizational life of the resort is not only framed within a dedicated time or event; in some cases, it directly influences the way in which work is set up. For instance, according to the housekeepers, one villa is haunted by djinns. To deal with the situation, the management team allowed the staff of the department to clean the villa in a cohort during the off-season so they could protect each other should any spiritual threat occur.

Interestingly, locals are not always the ones expressing these beliefs. For instance, worries about djinns haunting a villa started when a client claimed to have been awakened by a ghost several time in the bedroom of the accommodation. The story
was then picked up by locals and reinterpreted within the frame of their animist beliefs. Furthermore, these stories also affect European employees. Asked to comment on this story during one of my interviews, the beautician mentioned that she’d rather avoid the topic, for she could not sleep well after she talks about it.

The emergence of many of these spiritual manifestations is based on individual testimonies and rarely builds on clear religious rules. Depending on their interlocutor, locals may present a different version of the story behind a certain belief; they may also refuse to share it with certain interlocutors or plainly deny it; when I asked the department leader of the laundry room about the haunted villa, she laughed and denied having heard of such a thing, asking me who I heard this story from. Yet, the management team told me earlier that she was the one who requested that the accommodation be cleaned in group during the wintering.

These changes of versions and behaviors create a form of mystery, a grey area that makes it particularly difficult for Europeans to evaluate whether the spiritual claim is actually believed or whether they are being teased or fooled by locals. Sometimes however, believed or not, spiritual manifestations can go beyond the limit of what the management team tolerate. One employee regularly arrived late at work because “an evil force kept him in bed, stopping him from getting up in the morning.” The employee did not get rehired the ensuing year.
Chapter 14 – Incidents, Cover-Ups and Their Ensuing Narratives

It was around four o’clock when Apolline and Solène, two European employees from the reception desk, walked into the main restaurant looking for Rolland, a local waiter recently hired. The young man was not present, and one of the local staff members mentioned that he was probably down at the beach restaurant, washing the dishes from lunch. The statement seemed somehow surprising to Apolline and Solène, for the team usually finished the kitchen cleaning much earlier in the afternoon. As they walked down the long series of stairs that connects the main unit of the domain to its section below along the sea shore, they could hear loud African voices and laughter arising from the terrace of the beach restaurant. Although personal visits are forbidden, it is not uncommon for recently employed workers to sneak in relatives in order to show them the resort from inside. This is what Apolline and Solène told me that they immediately thought. By the time the women reached the last few steps, the noise had stopped and two strangers were hastily walking toward the exit gate. Rolland was behind the terrace bar, hanging up the phone and rushing to get the bottle of pastis and the three glasses out of sight. He welcomed the women with a radiant smile as they walked toward him. One of his colleagues upstairs had sounded the alarm but maybe just a little too late.
This story was reported to me by one of the European protagonists during an informal conversation over a drink. It is one among many anecdotes that non-local employees share with one another. These narratives, introduced as witty events, are delivered with an amused tone and generally revolve around unexpected behavior of local staff members. Their circulation goes beyond the simple notion of gossip. The narratives seldom focus on personal life. Instead, they highlight with both humor and self-awareness the cultural gaps or group differences observed by the European protagonists during work activities with locals. For Europeans, these anecdotes are part of the folklore of the organization; the narrators are sprinkled with amusedly dismissive comments such as “That’s Africa!” which is meant to point out what they consider Africa as an atypical and ever-surprising work environment. As such, the stories are sometimes shared with befriended clients during cocktail hours, in the flow of a conversation about local culture.

Taken independently, these stories remain anecdotes about incidents that rarely bear severe consequences. In spite of the above reported episode, Rolland was seen as a valued seasonal worker by the management team and they did not hesitate to rehire him the following year. Analyzed collectively however, they bring to light an important dimension of the life at the resort. Each season brings its share of stories, some based on isolated events, some on recurrent ones. Like a series of snapshots, these stories capture and isolate specific moments of the work life at the resort and form a group of organizational tales meant to illustrate the folklore of this workplace. The accumulation of “events” as well as their circulation through narratives serve to build the collective memory of the organization and influence the way it operates.
After presenting a brief typology of these stories, I will expand on certain of their key characteristics as well as the image of the work life they construct. Finally, I will discuss the impact that the events and their oral circulation have on the organization, in terms of both activity and group dynamics.

14.A. Cultural Gap Stories

From a taxonomic standpoint, we can identify two types of stories: the cultural gap stories and the incident stories. Cultural gap stories focus on amusing (to Europeans) misunderstandings between locals and Europeans that specifically result from the differences in cultural backgrounds. The below anecdote, reported by a restaurant manager, provides a good illustration of cultural gap stories:

"The swimming pool is just aside of the restaurant. The kids jump in the pool and there is always water splashing [on the restaurant's plate glass windows]. And with the sun you can see it. So, I once asked... it must have been two or three years ago, probably the first year I was here, I think... and I asked one of the daily workers in charge of washing the dishes: "Look, it would be great to clean the glass because..." And I felt that he was not... you know... (moving his arms to illustrate confusion) [...] their houses, there is no windows so, how do you want him to know! I anticipated the issue. I told him: "Someone from the laundry room will show you quickly how to do it and you'll do the rest." And I left. I came back two hours later and I saw him fervently rubbing the window. I was: "Wow..." proud of myself, you know. My advice was fruitful. And I came closer and I realized he was using a scouring sponge. If you look carefully, you'll notice: two of the glasses are full of scratches now. ""
In analyzing more deeply cultural gap stories, it is important to keep in mind that both the environment and the activities at the resort are centered on meeting the needs of the clients (i.e., Europeans with luxury expectations). The buildings (e.g., villas, reception, restaurants, etc.) as well as the furniture, although esthetically Africanized, respond to European norms and functional needs. The work activities focus on sustaining the standards of upper-end western hospitality. Consequently, all employees tacitly assume that tasks ought to be performed in a European way, at least meet European standards.

In this regard, one may expect European employees to be at an advantage in this work environment: they navigate within reasonably familiar territories. Indeed, it is easier for them to anticipate the clients' expectations. Because they share a common background, their interpretation of a "luxury experience" is relatively similar and responding to customers' needs is largely a matter of sensing what they, employees, would like if they were customers themselves. This deeper customer understanding and knowledge formed from years of socialization starting at a very young age, is not easily transferrable to locals.

As such, it creates a stance of deference from the local staff who depend on European colleagues to evaluate the quality of task performance; the former assumes that the latter knows what decision to make as well as what and how to perform most activities. Therefore, while these stories reflect cultural gaps, they also indirectly highlight the importance of European supervision to the storyteller.
14.B. Incident Stories

*Incident* stories evolve around mild misbehaviors of certain local staff members. Most of these stories share a common basic structure, well-illustrated by Rolland's story: a transgression of the tacit rules of the resort, an individual or collective cover-up, and a resolution in which a member of the European staff finds out about the trickery. In many of the incident stories, the key element lies not in the incidents themselves but rather in the way in which the local staff deals with them, especially the cover-ups, as illustrated by the following story.

As one among four nightshift guards, Mané secures the entry gate of the resort from 5pm to 5am, a mission that requires sitting at the entrance post, making occasional rounds, and controlling the comings and goings at the resort. The guards work 12-hour shifts, four days in a row. The hours can be long and solitary. In such context, it is not particularly surprising to hear accounts of occasional somnolence. Solène, a young European manager, shared one such story with me:

"It was around 1:30am, and I was coming back from a nightclub in the village. Mané was at the entrance, snoring on his chair. I shook my keys in front of him for a little while before he woke-up and opened the gate."

Europeans and locals alike know that the resort culture is highly tolerant of mild lapses or misbehavior. After that night, Solène did not pay much attention to the incident itself but confessed that she could not make sense of the attitude that followed. When she met Mané two days later, the guard spontaneously brought up the topic and insisted that he was absolutely not sleeping; he was in fact conducting a Muslim prayer dedicated to 1,000 people and could not stop in the middle of his
effort. Solène offered a kind laugh to suggest both that she was not duped, and that the incident did not matter. Not deterred in the least, the guard stuck to his story no matter what.

Many incident stories revolve around occurrences that the Europeans came to label “cover-ups”. While most cover-ups involve omissions, oblique responses and equivocations, they occasionally entail a more active role (e.g., Rolland’s story) or sometimes, what appears to expatriates as a bold lie (e.g., Mané’s story). Although European staff members easily understand the motives behind certain cover-ups (e.g., occasionally stolen material such as spoons and flashlights), they have more difficulty in making sense of the attempts of locals to conceal minor problems (e.g., unexpected absences or occasional somnolence). In their views, the accommodating rules of the resort make such issues quite inconsequential.

Regrettably, despite many cautious attempts, my discussions with local employees did not allow me to untangle this delicate topic. The episode of the nightshift illustrates well my difficulties; following the story shared by Solène, I conducted a long interview with Mané. After several hours of discussions over two nights—covering personal and professional life, sharing goals and aspirations as well as successes and disappointments—I broached the issue of sleep deprivation. I was cautious in my words and tried to keep my inquiries as open and non-judgmental as possible. Among other things, I asked him whether he had ever fallen asleep, even briefly. Mané had worked as a nightshift guard for several years now and I expected him to acknowledge occasional fatigue. Yet, all my questions on the topic received an
unconditional “no”, and no reference was made of the “prayer” incident although it had happened only a few days earlier.

Most of my attempts, direct or indirect, to discuss cover-ups with locals had similar fruitless outcomes. One may expect locals to have their own stories about Europeans’ behaviors and belief systems. These stories would help get a more complete picture of the narratives that circulates at the resort. In analyzing that failure, I recognize that my status of white European resort client played a significant role, and while I felt at first particularly frustrated by this lack of results, I have come to believe that no action on my side could have overcome this barrier, especially in the frame of a 10-day field trip. My status carried an inherent power dynamic that no amount of cautious approaches and friendly overtures could change but I nourish strong hopes that a less time constrained and more experienced ethnographer can obtain the highly valuable insights on this question.

For the time being and for the purpose of this study, I will proceed with hypotheses built from personal notes, analysis of interviews, and European staff members’ views. Although obtaining information from locals was difficult, European employees happily shared their opinions on the matter of cover-ups. I have summarized them below in a set of hypothetical explanations. I hope they will be valuable not only as tentative explanations on the phenomenon, but also as a record of the interpretations of cover-ups by European stakeholders.

14.C. On the interpretations of cover-ups

During my interviews, Europeans most frequently and spontaneously brought up cultural arguments to make sense of local cover-ups. The amusedly dismissive
"That's Africa!"-like comments that accompany the recounting of some of these stories further supports this impression that Europeans consider culture as the preponderant factor of the cover-up equation. In discussing this cultural dimension, arguments take essentially two forms: the strong solidarity and the culture of lying.

Throughout my various trips in Casamance, I have frequently heard Europeans making references to the concept of 'local solidarity,' which they associate to a strong sense of unity, generosity and cooperation among local populations. This belief is often reinforced by the interpretations western tourists make of their observations of local customs and habits. For instance, Casamanceses frequently refer to their cousins, neighbors or close friends as brothers, sisters or mothers, words that take a very different meaning in most occidental societies. The financial interdependence among generations [See Chapter 12] constitutes another example of observation that European visitors interpret as reflective of the sense of community and solidarity of locals—sometimes ignoring the role that economic necessity may play in these practices. Similarly, European employees at the resort often conceive of 'cover-up' events as a form of group connivance among individuals who share a common culture and a relatively similar economic and social status.

However, solidarity alone cannot make up for a full account of the root cause of cover-ups. For one thing, this interpretation only makes sense of collective cover-ups, not individual ones, like that of Mané. For another, it does not help understand why individuals identified by a misbehavior so compulsively try to hide it.

For this reason, the culture of lying is another lens through which Europeans sometimes interpret these events. The term culture of lying may sound particularly
critical and condemnatory. This is why it is important for me to highlight that most of the accounts I have of this line of reasoning rarely label it in such a direct and provocative way. They however all revolved around the same concept, most straightforwardly presented by Paloma, a young European employee who lived for five years with and is now married to a Senegalese. The term *culture of lying* is inspired by one of my discussions with her; below is an extract of the verbatim:

"They lie. You have to know it. It is not necessarily a bad thing for them. They just do it. A lot."

Questioned regarding her views on the root-causes and the potential embedding process of such a cultural trait, Paloma continues:

"They are always afraid to ask. Their education is about... you don't do this well, I slap you. Threatening. And, also, this is why, I'm guessing, [...] they don't want to take blame for anything. Because if they take blame, they [admit that they] made an error, and somehow, in their minds, someone slaps them. Because when you don't do something right, they slap you. You don't come here when they ask you, they slap you. They shout at you. Since you're a little child. And you see this all the time. They call you 'imbecile'. So this is why, when they grow up, they're like this. I have the impression that they'd rather lie about something than recognize that they have done something wrong, because their education has never told them to do this."

This testimony puts forward the idea that mistakes and wrongdoings, even minor, are severely reprimanded in the Senegalese upbringing. The authority is presented as rough and, to a certain extent, unforgiving. Implicit to these beliefs about local culture is the line of reasoning inferring that locals perceive Europeans as a form of
authority at the workplace and that, treating them as such, they become reluctant to expose or recognize any weakness for fear of the resulting reprimand. Cover-ups are interpreted by Europeans as the consequence of a cultural premise nurtured by locals' education.

While these understandings are primarily theories formed by Europeans, some of the behaviors and intents they assign to locals lead Europeans to believe that locals may lack accountability for their mistakes at the workplace. This perceived lack of accountability may be seen as infantile, which has implications on the way authority is exerted at the resort.
Chapter 15 – Patterns of Justification: 
Paternalistic Leadership

“... It's part of a paternalistic managerial style, which may sound pejorative in Europe, but which is not at all when you live in Africa [...].”

“... The African... even if they are free since I don't know how many years, it's like that: you're white, you're the boss. They assume that right away: 'You're white then... you're superior.' And we do not want that, we do not ask for that, we do not say that, but it's like that, it's all natural: You're white, you're superior, that's it."
(Comments from two European managers)

Based on the context, paternalism may encompass different concepts. In popular culture—i.e., the sense in which it is understood by European employees at the resort, and hence, the sense in which it is used in this work—paternalism refers to the general attitude of acting as a father toward an individual or a group. The mechanisms of paternalism involve a dominant and a subordinate entity. While the dominant behavior, intentional or not, conscious or not, leads one to treat adults as children, it is important to note that paternalism may also result from a perceived self-infantilization of the subordinate entity.

My interviews and field observation led me to believe that a complex combination of factors creates and sustains paternalism as a form of legitimized authority at the resort, and in particular a dominant/subordinate relation between Europeans and
locals. These factors may be arranged in two main categories: (a) environmental factors—largely under the control of European staff members—and (b) beliefs and attitudes of local employees. Some of these factors were described in some detail in previous Chapters. I will articulate them here in the context of my analysis of paternalism at the resort.

15.A. Environmental factors

First, the economic situation of the two parties leads to a dominant-subordinate relationship. The disparity of capital and limited source of formal employment provides locals with inadequate alternatives to their job at the resort, making them more vulnerable and dependent upon their employer's decisions than Europeans, who, despite the economic downturn of their home countries, still have many more career choices at their disposal.

Second, as mentioned earlier [see Chapter 14], employees work within a westernized environment. The objective of the resort is to offer European clients a luxury experience. Locals must therefore adapt to and operate in an unfamiliar world in which standards, leisure activities, tastes, esthetical concerns, preoccupations, etc. are radically different from their own. In discussing this cultural gap, Marine mentions the case of a recently hired local who had been exposed to French culture for a long time:

"I think we found a fantastic [new] employee. Honestly, the fact that she was in a relationship with a French for seven years, even though I'm not sure she had a lot of occasions to go to France... but she lived with him...she has a huge advantage. Her speaking skills and the way she establishes contact with clients... it's really
natural to her. You need to realize that the cultural gap is so huge... there are things that you can only acquire with time. "

From this testimony, we may infer that cultural knowledge is believed to be a key to perform well in this workplace. It is assumed that such knowledge allows the employee to appraise her own work with the same evaluation grid as used by Europeans. Because work and tasks need to meet certain managerially-defined standards, an inability to perceive these standards (i.e. understand the evaluation grid) puts the employee in a role of subordinate, dependent on someone else to assess and validate the outcome of their effort.

This belief is also visible in the organizational practice. As discussed in Chapter 11, Europeans oversee many tasks operated by locals. European interns, for instance, visit the restaurant before each meal to double check that the maître d’hôtel and his team did not miss any item on the room preparation checklist. The Director validates almost every order supplies, and the Director General regularly tours the resort to provide a “European eye” on the gardens and certain maintenance work.

Finally, one last important environmental factor that frames the relation between Europeans and locals within a dominant/subordinate model is the lifestyle of expatriates at the resort. The latter live partly like clients: they benefit from cleaning services, enjoy restaurant’s food, have access to hot water all the time, etc. This has several important consequences. First, this comfortable lifestyle including room and board conveys the idea that their exist a cast of privileged members within the working community. Second, the fact that they experience certain services primarily intended to clients gives them the ability to judge the service quality like
clients, putting them at a serious advantage to evaluate the work at the resort.

Third, they eat at the restaurant with the two Directors—expatriates themselves. This gives them an exceptional opportunity to create strong bonds with the most powerful decision makers of the organization. It also creates an ambiguity to clients and other members of the staff who then associate these employees with the management team, as illustrated by the semantic discussion with a local reported in Chapter 12, but also in comments from western staff, such as European interns:

"When we go to dinner at the restaurant, Apolline and I are included in the term 'management team'. [...] This term is used for us because... uh... we are part of the employees who eat at the restaurant. We don't go and eat behind the kitchen with Senegalese employees. And also, we are always with the two Directors, if I may say. [...] But right now, the official job appointment on my badge is 'Reception'."

Finally and most importantly, access to these services implies that locals serve their expatriate colleagues, reinforcing the dominant/subordinate pattern.

Eating habits at the resort constitute a fertile ground to study group dynamics operating between locals and Europeans. For Marine, the separation between the two groups, beyond expatriates' contractual status that includes room and board, is the result of a cultural gap:

"They don't eat the same way we do so they are not especially comfortable to eat with us, they don't particularly like the food either, and on our side, we don't really like to see someone eating with their hand."

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In discussing these differences, she also points out that Amidou, the only local manager, eats frequently with them before the season starts, but stops when tourists arrive because his workload increases significantly, pushing him to focus on his job in order to go back home early and see his family. Furthermore, at the expatriate table, lunch and dinner topics revolve mainly around work—expatriates are cut from their family and friends, and daily life often turns around the resort—and someone like Amidou has a life outside the walls of Le Zéphyr, with other topics and daily subjects of concern. Finally, eating with expatriates is not necessarily amusing for him, Marine says, because, as a Muslim, he does not drink alcohol, and overall, does not like most of the dishes in the menu:

“...When he eats with us, it’s always the same thing: a beefsteak. [...] But he knows that he can eat with us whenever he wants. In theory, he is not fed by the restaurant, but he can order whatever he feels like eating. In this regard, he is treated in exactly the same way as the interns or the beautician. ”

15 B. Beliefs and Attitudes of Locals

Certain attitudes and beliefs local employees have regarding leadership also contribute to the paternalistic style of authorship in place at the resort. First certain local employees view leadership as a form of “fatherhood.”

When asked what it meant to be a department leader, a local department leader explained: “The department is like a family and I’m the father, the good father.”

Throughout my interviews, I received similar comments referring to the Director General’s role at the resort. Locals also describe leaders as omniscient and impartial
references of authority, appointed to ensure the good of all subordinates—describing characteristics that children often associate to parental figures:

"The management team judges. They watch. They know well. They know well who does a good job and who doesn’t. Even if [I] try to hide something, they know it. Even if [I] try to cover for the misbehaviors of someone, they know it. Immediately."

"[As a department leader,] I’m the moral person. I should not be the person who gets upset. I should not be someone who’s bad. I have to be fair. Someone who tells the truth and who says what is the truth."

"The [Director General] knows when we do a good job. If you do a good job, it means it will get noticed. Otherwise it’s not that good. He really knows what happens at the resort."

Perhaps one reason that helps explain this phenomenon is the influence age has in Jola’s culture. In a society where children are educated not only by their parents, but also by their brothers, sisters, neighbors and more distant relatives, age is seen as an important element of hierarchy. According to locals, one owes deferential respect to someone older, even to someone elder by one year. This form of authority may be transposed at the workplace by locals as the attitude one should have toward authority.

While employees see in their superior certain qualities commonly associated to parents, the attitude of some locals contribute to infantilize themselves in the eyes of Europeans. Incidents that circulate among western employees through the form of entertaining stories [See Chapter 14] participate in the development of a certain
image of locals, that of individuals whose work “needs” supervision for they do not always take responsibility for their behaviors, as expressed by Marine:

"We don’t like [colonialist behaviors] at all. [...] But in the meantime, we treat [locals]... We treat them, honestly, like... like our kids. And why I say kids... because some are very childish in their behavior. They laugh much more easily than us, it is part of their charm but sometimes, they are amused by foolish things, so they are a bit childish. But this is also what our clients like here."

The combination of environmental factors and the perceived attitudes of locals toward authority does seem to explain the mechanisms behind the paternalistic leadership that governs the activity of the resort. It is important to note however that this form of leadership seems largely accepted by those in the organization and is not interpreted negatively by Europeans or by locals (at least overtly). Regardless, one occasionally hears in European employees and managers’ discourse a discomfort with paternalism, a discomfort perhaps due to images of slavery and the colonialist past it conjures up in the mind of individuals.
Conclusion

Throughout my 10 days of fieldtrip at the resort, walking around with my pencil, my little notepad, and my I-phone recorder, I was given the opportunity to see the resort through different eyes than that of a tourist. I was able to see both the “on-stage” and “backstage” worlds of the resort. In addition to my long discussions with diverse members of the staff, I enjoyed a full access to the workplace, cups of green tea à la Sénégalaise with various workers, several beers with the childcare employee, a (half) nightshift with the security guards, a Senegalese lunch with the restaurant team in the resort’s kitchen, and many other privileged experiences.

Certainly, these experiences were valuable in getting a better understanding of the social and economic dynamics at play at the resort, a component of Le Zéphyr’s life that one does not really notice as a simple client. Yet, my post-fieldtrip work, during which I spent countless hours alone, back at the desk of my Bostonian student flat, examining the material I had previously collected, was I believe the most instructive part of my ethnographic effort. It was as if organizing the data and making sense of my informants’ viewpoints and contradictions, made me apprehend this unconventional workplace in a different way, revealing before my eyes a novel picture of Le Zéphyr.
One may see in the story of this 5-Star resort the illustration of a modern form of colonialism, certainly more self-aware, kind, apologetic and culturally tolerant than it was 100 years ago, but still invasive and domineering nonetheless. An alternative lens through which one may want to look at Le Zéphyr, however, is that of a small venture operating at the intersection of two worlds socially, economically and culturally different, yet existing within the frame of a single globalized market.

Entertaining such a view, one may see in Charles and Marine two contemporary entrepreneurs trying to balance, with the cultural bias inherent to all individuals, the economic and management imperatives of a struggling small business with the social duty that they believe their privileged status of westerners requires of them.

As for local employees, I can only acknowledge and commiserate with their frustration upon seeing how little they derive from the heavy money flow that is generated from their labor—labor dedicated to maintaining the opulent way of life of a (sometimes far too unaware) privileged part of humanity.

I would like to conclude this study with what has become a rather traditional and expected (but no less important) ethnographic ending, a commentary on the limitations of my own work. First, as expressed in previous chapters, my status of white European frequent client at the resort undoubtedly limited the breath of material I was able to collect from local informants. Although I naively dreamt that my self-proclaimed role of ethnographer would allow me to quickly overcome this obstacle, I can only admit, upon re-reading this finalized work, how modest are my insights on locals' view of European stakeholders, both clients and colleagues. In this respect, I tend to think that a significantly lengthier fieldwork (6 months to 2 years)
would have probably allowed me to gain the trust necessary to generate a more balanced and complete picture of the work life at the resort.

Second, the fact that I am an apprentice ethnographer with no prior experience in the field certainly did not play to my advantage. The occasional lack of distance and the trial and error approach of my interviews are to count among my biggest missteps. Everybody has to start somewhere!

But lastly and most importantly, the frame of the thesis project in which this study was written, largely bounded the time I was able to dedicate to it. As I write this conclusion one day before the official thesis deadline, I realize how this time constraints impacts this output. For one thing, as mentioned earlier, the breath and complexity of the topics that the structure and activities of the resort generates are such that a much longer, deeper fieldtrip would be required to build a comprehensive picture of this reality—to the extent, probably limited, that a “comprehensive picture” of reality can be made. For another, the time restrictions I was operating under pushed me to reduce to a bare minimum my review of prior academic literature on related subjects. To better apprehend the frame of mind of locals, it would be relevant to explore the existing body of literature on Jola’s culture, agricultural practices, religious beliefs and political system. Similarly, organizational ethnographers have studied cross-cultural ventures, including those involving interactions with occidentals and more traditional populations. More familiarization with such work would unquestionably have helped me achieve more analytical depth and enriched my contribution (however modest) to the field.
Finally, I must note that time did not allow me to explore all the topics on which I was able to collect data when in the field. In particular, I had to put aside a consideration of gender relationships in the text. This is an omission of some note since Senegal is a country that many European I talked to considered strongly “macho” and represents an important factor in the employee dynamics at the resort. And I omitted including materials on the inter-ethnic relationships among local employees at the resort. Some come from the North of Senegal and belong to different ethnic groups, in particular the Wolof. Several workers mentioned how it partly shaped their relationships to other local employees. Yet, I believe these two issues—and many others—leave potential for great new ethnographic work at a resort like Le Zéphyr. There remains a lot on the table!
References


Pictures

Picture 1: map of the Resort
Picture 2 (above): the swimming pool (promotional material); Picture 3 (below): one of the resorts' villa (promotional material)
Picture 4: The green areas of the resort are composed of local plants organized in western-like gardens, connected by concrete walks.
Picture 5: The Ladies (*les Dames*) walk several miles per day with a basin of fruits and vegetables on their head, going from hotel to hotel, and restaurant to restaurant, to sell their merchandise.
Picture 6: Resort's cook at work at the main restaurant. Picture 7: The resort's main entrance and its security post, on the right.
Picture 8: "For the moment, we retain the title of best garden of [region]. Despite the repeated attacks from the competition [...] This is what the clients who walk by tell us," explains Simon, the team leader of the Garden department.
Picture 9: an employee of the Garden department with the Kadjando, traditional Jola tool primarily used in the paddy fields
Picture 10: The base of a palm tree serves as the altar to honor the fetish. During the yearly ceremony, a Marabou recites prayers and invocations, offers alcohol to the spirits by spilling the content of a few bottles on the altar and sacrifices an animal. The staff members then cook the animal, eat it and leave a few bones on the altar as a sign of recognition for the spirits.