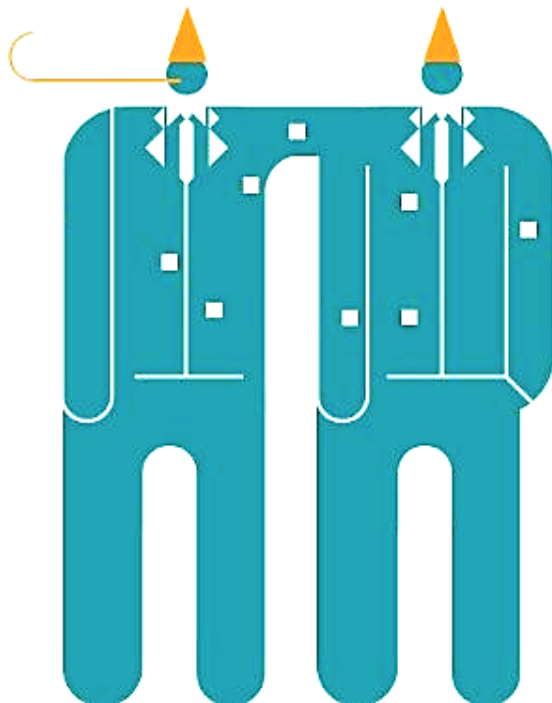# The Role of Passion at Work

# in the 21ˢᵗ Century

## A Discourse Analysis

Master Thesis – MSc in Business Adninistration and Philosophy

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## Introduction

The use of the term *passion* has significantly increased in the last decades, especially in Western post-bureaucratic organisations. Many CEO's, heads of human resources departments and employees hold a dominant and positive discourse on passion, contradicting its pre-modern conception on several aspects; this evolution from a passive and negative view to a positive understanding of passion raised my interest. The term passion appears to be more than its current meaning. The different connotations it has had over the last centuries have greatly influenced its modern understanding, and differing interpretations.

As I have personally been called *passionate* several times throughout my work experiences, it made me wonder: What do we mean by *passion*? Why does is seem so important to be passionate about one's work nowadays? And how the way we use the term *passion* still relates to its pre-modern understanding? This paper is therefore an attempt to understand the meaning of passion in the 21$^{st}$ Century, how it has evolved over time and what is its impact on individuals nowadays. By observing the different Discourses on passion, and creating a theoretical framework to compare them, I aspire to understand and raise awareness on their impact on individuals, and allow the workers to understand their own expectations towards passion at the work place.

To do so, it seemed important to research the History of passion, and its pre-modern interpretations. This form of etymological research allowed me to unfold the multiple aspects of passion, which influence our common understanding of the term nowadays. As *passion* has been a central concept in Philosophy since the Hellenic period, its history played a significant role in building its current meaning. A semantic change in the meaning of passion can be observed, and this present analysis suggests ways in which this shift can be interpreted and explained.

My observation shows that, in the pre-modern times, passion was defined as a passive and potentially dangerous affect. It was understood as a force that takes control over individuals, and threatens their autonomy. As in the modern Discourse, people seem to look for passion, as a way to give meaning to their lives. Being passionate has become an empowering characteristic, as well as the point of departure for a meaningful carrier. The modern Discourse defines passion as the

new indicator of engagement and commitment towards one's work, which paradoxically contradicts the pre-modern conception of passion.

In this work, an emphasis is put on Discourses, and especially on the relationship between general Discourses and local discourses. I looked into *how* the general understanding of the term passion influences and is influenced by individuals' way of writing and talking about passion. It is essential to differentiate the situated use of passion from its societal understanding, as well as defining the relationships between them.

In the first part of this work, I explain two different types of discourses: the situational, "close-range" discourse, as well as the more general, "long-range" Discourse; a theory mainly influenced by the work of Alvesson and Kärreman (2000). Thereafter, a long-range Discourse analysis of the term passion throughout History, and in the 21$^{st}$ century is exposed. The concept of passion in the Ancient Greece, during the raise of Christianity and in the Renaissance will be exposed, which is far from being an exhaustive view of passion's History, but these theories will be used as an orientation map, and a way to define some characteristics of the pre-modern view of passion. The differences between the pre-modern and the modern understanding of passion form the conceptual framework for the rest of the analysis, differentiating a passive, i. e. pre-modern view from an active, i. e. modern view of passion.

Then, a more specific close-range discourse analysis takes place. This latter is based on interviews made at Locado, a small post-bureaucratic organisation located in Copenhagen. The presence of a strong Discourse on passion in the start-up industry made it possible to build interesting dialogues with the employees at Locado, all very aware of their view on passion and the way it influences their relationship towards their work. Both the active and passive ways of understanding passion seem to be present in this close-range discourse. While certain employees embrace the positive force of passion and the benefits of having an activity, which is closely related to their personality, others fear the impact of this closeness, and the lack of barriers between their work, i. e. passion and private life.

Several discussions are influenced by these findings, and the last chapter is dedicated to four of them: the need for work-life balance, which partially depends

on the active or passive view of passion; the concept of job crafting, which grew simultaneously with the trend for passion at work; the important role of social media for the growth of such discourses, and the danger of neo-normative control in post-bureaucratic organisations. Inspired by the work of Maravelias (2007), this last discussion describes how the pressure towards a passionate life can be compared to the pressure towards more self-management, experienced by certain employees nowadays.

By analysing the different Discourses on passion, this work aims to offer an explanation for how and why passion has such an impact on employees, and how managers should handled the matter in the best way possible.

## 1. Discourses vs. discourses

*"Every discourse, even a poetic or oracular sentence, carries with it a system of rules for producing analogous things and thus an outline of methodology."*

Jacques Derrida

Social sciences have experienced a linguistic turn in the last decades. The interest for language has increased, especially in disciplines such as sociology, psychology, anthropology and organisational studies (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000a: 136). A great part of the researchers in those fields has started to analyse subjects from a linguistic perspective, and pay more attention to language and discourses. Often inspired by the work of Michel Foucault, researchers see in discourses the power to form objects and subjects. Discourses seem to influence the social world, as well as social practices (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000b: 1127).

In this section, the difficulty of research based on Discourses will be outlined. The meaning of the term *discourse* itself is defined, as well as the potentials and dangers of certain types of discourse analysis. Furthermore, the way in which one can extrapolate from a local discourse to a more conceptual Discourse and its implications are discussed. The necessary shift in perspective is examined at

last, in order to understand how the material in this empirical research can be used for further assumptions.

## Meaning of discourse and its limitations

It is rare to find discussions about what discourse means, as most researchers would take its meaning for granted. Nevertheless the term discourse often leads to confusion, as it may represent almost everything there is (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000b: 1125-1127). A simple definition brought up by Potter and Wetherell's delimits discourse to "text and talks in social practices" (1987). It sees language as a mean to interact and define one's experience. In that sense, discourse analysis becomes the analysis of how people use language in specific social settings.

Another take on this, which is widely spread in social sciences, is the Foucauldian definition of discourse. In his view, discourses are sets of statements that constitute objects and subjects. They are not the product of a given social reality, but they are what shapes it. Discourses are linked to the rules by which individuals can talk about and experience certain phenomenon. As Watson would put it, discourses are…

> "…sets of statements, concepts, terms and expressions, which constitute
> a way of talking and writing about a particular issue, thus framing the
> way people understand and act with respect to that issue" (1994: 113).

In other words, discourses are drawn upon and constituting the classification of our social world. They exercise a great power over human subjects and shape social practices (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000b: 1139).

Those definitions of discourse take into account the main concern with language: it can be ambiguous, metaphorical, and highly context-dependant. In extreme cases, language can be seen as a system of distinctions that relays on unstable foundations and should not be trusted. It is crucial to take into account the false robustness of language and its tendency to be contradictory in order to treat discourse for what is is: one way of relating to the world (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000a: 141). It remains one way to access a subjective truth and discuss the social world from a constructivist point of view.

## Multiple dimensions of discourses

There are two main dimensions on which discourses can be analysed, which assume a difference in form and scale. The first is a *local* dimension, a way to look at discourses at close-range. This dimension emphasises the importance of language and its production in specific contexts and social settings. This is what Alvesson and Kärreman would call the "micro-discursive level of analysis", or the analysis of discourses with a small *d* (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000b: 1133). An example of this type of discourse will be analysed in this thesis: the occurrence of the term passion within several interviews made at a company in Copenhagen. This type of discourse is highly situated within time and space, and influenced by structuring parameters as the subjectivity of the employees, or the way in which the questions are asked. Nevertheless, this close-range perspective reveals clear information about the social reality experiences in this specific setting (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000b: 1138).

In opposition to that first dimension, a more *ideological* way of looking at Discourses is observed, in which Discourses are historically situated, and not necessarily bound to one specific social context. The use of a certain type of vocabulary becomes coupled to specific phenomena is a loose way, by referring to them or creating them. This may be defined as a "long-range" Discourse, or Discourse with a capital *d* (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000b: 1133). An example of this type of Discourse is the one, which will be analysed in the second part of this paper: the occurrence and meaning of passion throughout history and its impact on society. This analysis does not focus on one single instance, in which passion is mentioned, but on the evolution of a broader understanding of passion. This type of research is built on several researchers' analysis, which should be used with vigilance, as they remain subjective interpretations.

Another way to present those two approaches is the bottom-up and the top-down analysis. The local analysis of discourse can be seen as a way to extrapolate from the source, i. e. the bottom, some information in order to define the societal patterns, i. e. the top. On the other hand, the analysis of long-range Discourses is a way to analyse the patterns in order to understand what happens in more specific situations, i. e. a top-down analysis. In this thesis, I will first proceed to a top-down

analysis, in order to decrypt certain patterns that I might recognize in the bottom-up analysis that will follow. In other words, I will try to grasp the subject matter in a larger scale before analysing a more specific situation, in which I will try to articulate certain patterns.

## The risk of moving from discourse to Discourse

As this will be followed by a close-range discourse analysis, it seems important to define the possible dangers of a two-levelled type of research. As Alvesson and Kärreman claim, there is a tension between close-range and long-range discourse analysis, which is mainly due to a different way of treating the discourses within the research. For instance, in the close-range discourse analysis, discourses are locally constructed objects, as in the long-range Discourse analysis, Discourses are based on a priori understandings of the objects (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000b: 1143). A close-range analysis focuses on the impact of a set of vocabulary on subjects and their worldviews, as a long-range analysis would rather focus on the impact of Discourses on society and general meanings. The latter is not restrained to a specific location and a specific time, it is therefore dangerous to treat it in the same way as a micro-discursive analysis.

The difference between close- and long-range discourse analysis calls for prudence in two-levelled types of research like this one. The movement from a close-range analysis to a long-range analysis does not call for aggregation, but rather a shift in perspectives. It is important to critically analyse the different types of material in order to only extrapolate, what is stable enough to be transported beyond a specific context (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000b: 1146). In our case, both the occurrence of the term passion in historical Discourses and in the local situation allows for a better understanding of certain ideas and believes, but it is not sufficient for a complete blend of the two.

## 2. Research Method

**Paradigm: social constructivism**

This work is based on a social constructivist paradigm. It implies that reality is built through Discourses and interactions between social agents. As a researcher, I observe a reality, which is socially constructed by the individuals interacting and the research that has already been done. It is a reality in which discussions and Discourses are the principal means to maintain, reconstruct and change reality. As Berger and Luckman claimed, researchers should observe society as being both based on an objective and subjective reality (1991: 78); the objective aspect being the creation of certain patterns, habituations and institutions through social behaviour. Human being tends to repeat certain actions, creating "ways of doing" things, which can be objectively observed (Berger and Luckman, 1991: 78). On the other hand, close-range discourse analyses enable to understand how subjectivity, i. e. the sense of self, thoughts and believes, is created. The individual interpretation of reality matters, as it influences reality itself. Therefore, both the level of *objectivity*, and of *subjectivity* matters in this type of research.

Social constructivism defends the idea that several truths can coexist simultaneously, and this research is only exposing one possible truth concerning the meaning of passion at work in the XXI century. This project does not aim to discard other possible meanings, or expose the only possible understanding of passion. It is a close- and long-range Discourse analysis, which enables a discussion over a situational truth.

**Research Strategy**

> *"Dialogical conceptions of interviews also relate to a general societal development toward a dialogical culture."*
>
> *(Kvale, 2006: 489)*

The analysis of the pre-modern Discourse on Passion and the modern Discourse on passion reveals the importance of that term for certain social agents throughout History, and in the 21st Century. It offers a way of understanding the matter, based

on the chosen literature and it allows me to define the patterns in which people have understood passion so far. As the case analysis, on the other hand, offers a contextual insight and a perspective on what passion might mean for workers in the 21st Century. The discussion I organised with five employees in a newly founded company enables me to verify certain assumptions I made regarding the modern understanding of passion. Even though my personal relationship with the interviewees and the setting in which the interviews were made have influenced the results, the dialogue with Locado's employees gave an insight into possible subjective understandings of passion.

The interviews took place in Locado's office and were done individually (see Appendix 1). All employees were individually invited to join me in a conference room for at least 20 minutes, in order to discuss their relationship with their work and their understanding of passion. Several questions were prepared and used in order to conduct the interviews. Inspired by the work of Kvale (2006: 489), it was important for me to allow the employees to first express their opinion on the subject, and then react to the theories I had developed on the different understandings of passion. The interviews were made in a way that allowed the discussion to be taken elsewhere if necessary; I decided to listen and encourage the interviewee to follow his or her train of thoughts.

However, I had ten questions prepared, which I systematically asked to each interviewee. My first questions were open and not directly linked to passion, such as: "What do you do for Locado?", "What relationship do you have with your work?", and "What are your expectations towards your work?". These first questions allowed the employees to express their instinctive understanding of work. Then, I asked a few questions concerning passion in relation to their work, such as: "Are you passionate about your work?" "What does *being passionate* mean to you?" and "Do you feel the presence of a specific Discourse on passion?". These questions allowed the employees to directly express their understandings of and relationship with passion. Finally, my last questions were more specific, as I wanted them to give me their opinion on my theoretical framework. I took the time to describe the different meanings of passion throughout history, and asked them if they felt more influenced by the pre-modern or modern understandings of passion.

The discourses I observed during the interviews allowed me to grasp many more aspects of the modern Discourse on passion, and observe new associations between the pre-modern and modern Discourses on passion.

Certain characteristics of the term passion, which are similar in the pre-modern Discourse, modern Discourse and the specific case, can be defined. I also realised that some parts are very contradictory, and that some interpretations of passion in History tend to be opposite to the modern Discourse on passion. Before starting with the definition of the pre-modern Discourse and modern Discourse on passion, I will define some of those *variables* and *constants*, which might help us to understand the diverse Discourses on passion in a better way.

# 3. Variables and Constants in Passion

> *There is no passion to be found playing small, in settling*
> *for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.*
> Nelson Mandela

## Passion and The Subject

In most understandings of the term passion, it is either possessed by an individual or part of an individual's personality. One either *has* passion or *is* passionate; it is therefore closely coupled to one's subjectivity and one's personality (Scheep, 2009: 63).

Passion involves intensity and energy, it is therefore often related to strong emotions or romantic love (Sheep, 2009: 58). It is an urge that pushes individuals to act in certain ways. The intensity involved in passion, often leads us to think that it touches upon the core of people's identity. As Sheep defines it:

> "Passion goes beyond mere engagement in what we are doing and
> where we are doing it, to be seen as an integral, perhaps necessary, part
> of who we are" (Sheep, 2009: 58).

This understanding of passion as being connected to one's true self is, as I will show later, very present in the modern Discourse on passion.

In some accounts of passion, the intensity just mentioned can overwhelm the individual and his or her capacity to take rational decisions (Meyer, 1998: 9). This take on passion is often observed in the idea of romantic love, but also in the pre-modern understanding of passion, as we will discuss in the following section. Passion is seen as extreme, impossible to control and irrational, but at the same time, a powerful mean to act upon things. On the one hand, passion makes us transcend ourselves, be outside of ourselves, and on the other hand, it is that which enables us to discover some part of our identity, which is paradoxical in many ways (Sheep, 2009: 59).

Another constant in the concept of passion is its capacity to make individuals achieve external goals (Meyer, 1998: 40). It is possible to think of passion as a mean, i. e. mediation, between our desires and their realisation. A passion can be a quest for something that is missing, or that needs to be done. In this context, passion allows individuals to become agents and realize things they would not do "naturally". It allows a transfer from a *natural* state to a more *artificial* state (Meyer, 2000b: 47). This new possibility creates a multitude of possible selves, that one can become. Hence the close connection between our passions and our personality: our passions are the variables, the aspects of an individual that are not dictated by Nature (Meyer, 2000b: 47).

The link between passion and the subject has varied over time, from an alienation of the subject in the pre-modern understanding to a realisation of the subject in the modern understanding. The intensity and the urge created by passion remain constant in both understandings though.

**The Lack of Passion**

An important variable in the understanding of passion is the meaning of being *without* passion. It is possible to see passion as the opposite of rationality, which would imply that a subject without passion is a rational subject, i. e. a person capable of investing his or her time and energy in rational activities, without being influenced by urges and strong emotions.

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As I will show in the following chapter on the pre-modern understanding of passion, a person without passion is seen as a wise person, i. e. a person in control of his or her desires. In this context, being without passion is a quality, as it shows a capacity to be in control of one's life (Meyer, 2000b: 22). As in the modern understanding of passion, a person without passion might be seen as superficial, boring or not in touch with his or her emotions and self. In the 21st Century, lacking passion equals lacking personality, as passions supposedly characterise individuals' identities and differentiate them from the crowd. A leader without passion for example lacks the required energy to inspire his co-workers and create common goals (Kibler, 2015). Somehow, a person without passion seems to be in control of most aspects of his or her life, which was once appreciated, but can be currently frowned upon.

There is not a clear moment in History, in which the discourse on passion shifted to be seen as a positive force. Some religious and philosophical thoughts influenced its development over the centuries, which will be exposed in the following chapter.

## 4. Pre-modern Discourse on Passion

*"The will to overcome a passion is in the end merely the*

*will of another or several other passions"*

*Frederick Nietzsche*

### Ancient Greece: Passion vs. logos

The ancient Greeks define passion as being in opposition to reason, as being a disorder of the spirit. Passions seems to be obstacles that need to be overcome in order to reach the Universal, i. e. Reason (Meyer, 1998: 10). Within the Greek tradition, two main understandings seem to be relevant for this thesis: Plato and Aristotle's.

According to Plato our passions trap us in a cave made of our own illusions. A cave in which every human beings belong when they are young, and would potentially grow out of. In this place, human beings are not able to look at the sun

directly, but only at the shadows it creates on the cave's walls (Plato, 1993: 514a). This analogy allows Plato to discuss the impact of passions and how they create a world of illusions for most individuals.

Plato supposes that it is easier for human beings to consider the sensible world they build within this cave as reality, rather than doubting it. In those terms, passions are the blinding sensations that nourish our illusions. They are a force, which is not reflected upon by the people it exercises its power on, as it occurs outside our consciousness - deep within our bodies - and drives us away from a certain "truth" (Meyer, 2000: 79).

In this context, it is the role of Philosophy to free us from this "foolishness of the body", and through our very selves, learn what has not been sullied (Plato, 1995: 66b-67a).

"To become a philosopher is to make this discovery and then act accordingly with regard to having a body and the sensible desires that characterizes it" (Meyer, 2000: 17).

Accordingly, passions are harmful, but necessary to the existence of Philosophy.

Plato claims that Philosophy allows people to become conscious of their own passions, hence overcome them. The philosopher becomes an example of a passion-free human being, completely in control of his actions. Concurrently, Plato acknowledges the existence of *guardians*, i. e. people aware of their own passions, and embracing them. The equilibrium between inhabitants of the Cave, guardians and philosophers represents Plato's definition of a well functioning city (Mayer, 2000: 25). A claim that is dangerous, as it creates a clear hierarchy, in which philosophers govern, and a part of the population stays in the cave, ignoring their own illusions and passions.

There is a duality in this understanding of passion, as it is both preventing us from doing what is good and absolving us, as no one can be conscious about it. There is a fundamental ambiguity within Plato's understanding of passion. Passion becomes a problem, which opposes itself to all resolution because no one is aware of it. Plato's understanding of passion creates an unviable contradiction, as Meyer explains:

"By passion, we become aware that it is necessary to go beyond ourselves, but on account of passion, we cannot imagine that there is a place beyond ourselves that can be sought out" (Meyer, 2000: 24).

Aristotle offers a slightly different perspective, as he sees passion as a new relationship with the being. He suggests that the being is multiple according to many perspectives and passions are not part of what is necessary, but are *propositions* of being (Meyer, 2000: 32). Passions are part of the dialectic, which belongs to the probable, the contestable. They become a sensible relation or an illusion, which disappears once one takes the nature of things into account (Meyer, 2000: 43). Passions becomes that which distracts individuals when they lose sight of what is essential, but at the same time, what makes them contingent. In the end, passions are absorbed into the necessity of what *is*.

This can be called an ethic of *logos*, in which passions are contingent, contrarily to the object of substance: our own nature. Simultaneously, Aristotle argues for a second ethic, which is contradictory: an ethic of *pathos*. This ethic sees passions as objects of regulation; in order to find out our nature, we need a just regulation of our passions. As Meyer describes:

"We human beings, by our irreducible quality, our difference, affirms pathos as our particular difference: this is passion" (Meyer, 2000: 46).

By regulating our passions, we become *agents*, we thrive towards goals that exist outside ourselves. Passion appears as a means towards those goals, in Aristotelian philosophy (Meyer, 2000: 46).

Despite the contradiction between an ethic of *logos* and *pathos*, Aristotle maintains the possible existence of both. By doing so, he brings ambiguity where Plato claimed the existence of a universal reason, in which passion is mainly an illusion (Meyer, 2000: 53).

## Christianity: Passion as a sin

Contrarily to the Greeks, who would see passions as part of the natural order of things, Christianity defines passions as obstacles that characterize the human condition. They restrain access to a certain truth and justice (Meyer, 2000: 62). Passions are seen as irreducible, as states of mind that human beings cannot escape.

With the example of the *original sin,* Christianity attempts to crystallize this concept of human condition. By biting the apple in Eden's garden, Adam and Eve succumbed to their passions and behaved as if they were Gods. In that interpretation, following one's passion is directly linked to being unfaithful to God, i. e. directing one's attention towards something else than God (Meyers, 1998: 10-11). As Meyers describes, "fleshly love is guilty since it brings us to love ourselves (pride) rather than God" (Meyers, 2000: 66). There has been a rupture with Reason, and intelligibly as the Greeks defined it. Christianity abolished the idea that individuals can be rational and live outside their passions. In this context, the only way to reach *absolute order* has become transcendental, and is no longer a question of rationality (Meyers, 2000: 66).

The Christian understanding of passion implies a very ascetic way of living. Passion is seen as that, which makes human beings sinful, therefore individuals should liberate themselves from all passions and embrace faith in God instead. But it remains unclear if Christians are free or irremediably sinful. And even if they are free, it is not guaranteed that they will find salvation through certain type of religious behaviours (Meyers, 2000: 67).

Again, Christians seem to be blocked in a paradox, which is quite similar to the one Plato experienced:

> "Passion is on the one hand an obstacle to the truth, which causes us to confuse the appearance of things with the things themselves, and that which pushes us to search for the truth, since we only have access to appearances and since the tangible world is nothing other than a trap that we must overcome."

Even though the Christian understanding of passion stays negative, it seems that passion remains the only means to search for the truth. The passion of the Christ is

an interesting example to illustrate that paradox. Christianity is based on the idea that individuals cannot find salvation through actions, but the Christ seems to be an exception to that rule. He shows that it is possible to escape one's condition by the means of his action. Which leads the Christian to the following paradox: are humans really free or irremediably sinful?

The texts written by Augustine in the 5th Century remained the base of Protestantism. He described humans as sinners in their nature, and unable to escape this state. This extreme point of view leads to other perspectives on the matter, and it became hard for the Christian Church to maintain their supremacy in the occidental World (Meyer, 1998: 15). The period between 1500 and 1900 counted many movements that contradicted Augustin's philosophy and view on passions.

## The breakthrough

Several authors were key to the Discourse that took place between 1500 and 1900, which made passions part of human nature and detached from morality. Thomas Aquina was the precursor of this thought, by claiming that passions are either good or bad in their nature. He even looks at passion as a way to access the "Good" (Meyer, 2000: 81). This is the thought that preceded the Renaissance, and a new way of looking at the Christian asceticism, as Meyer explains:

> "The dissolution, if only partial, of Christian asceticism corresponds to
> the opening up and enrichment of a world that since the Middle-Ages
> has lived in a state of contradiction" (Meyer, 2000: 92).

Humans are now seen as capable to reflect upon themselves without making reference to a mythical fall. An idea supported by Machiavelli, when he denounced the hypocrisy of Christian thoughts on Passion. In his view, passions should not be neglected any longer, as they are part of human nature - they are the truth of action and our only means to resist blindness (Meyer, 2000: 93). Human should therefore reflect upon their passions and become aware of them in order to liberate themselves or abandon themselves to them (Meyer, 2000: 99).

Smith, who claims that passions should become *interests* and should be followed to enrich the nation, brings the same logic further. The passion for power and wealth becomes legitimate and even encouraged, which motivates people to

work and create value. Passions become an extension of human's nature and no longer a rupture with it, a thought that became the groundwork of capitalism in the 18th Century.

It is then two centuries later that Freud will claim that sexual desire is part of our nature and should not be considered as a sin any longer. By doing so, he turns the idea of the original sin upside down and claims that neglecting our passion is the new sin, as it leads to even more frustration and psychological problems. Nevertheless, Freud claims that passions and desire should be maintained in a certain frame (Meyer, 1998: 23). The idea of a living based only on passions would imply anarchy and chaos. In the same way, Marx claims that the passion of the rich should be limited in order to protect the general interest. In other words, passions are no longer seen as bad *per se*, but they remain a part of human nature that should be controlled to some extent.

At this point, the idea of passion has experienced a complete turnover in less than four centuries (Meyer, 1998: 23). Through the Greeks and Christianity, the characteristic of passion as blinding and irrational was predominant, but this has changed during the Renaissance. Passion has become more than a sin or an obstacle, it has become a force, a source of energy and a way to access truth (Meyer, 2000b: 249). The powerful and overwhelming aspect of passion remains significant throughout those Discourses, but the take on passion's impact on individual has greatly changed.

## 19th Century: Passion as a realisation

A new Discourse on passion appears in the 19th Century, which will greatly influence the contemporary understanding of the term. Based on ideas from Smith, Nietzsche, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and other thinkers, passion becomes productive and a way to realise oneself. It becomes a pursuit of existence:

> "Passion is the only reality, the reality of our evanescence, made up of moments that we consider eternal, even though they are incarnated in smaller ends" (Meyer, 2000: 249).

Passion becomes the new way of knowing who we are, and what touches us. To be passionate or have a passion is to recognize the state of nature within us, i. e. the subjective sense of nature. Passions form our identity and show our alienation (Meyer, 2000: 102). However, it remains complex to be aware of one's passion due to the blindness it implies, and our incapacity to define what is nature within the human realm. As Meyer explains, "passion is the problem of human nature just as it is, paradoxically, its solution" (2000: 103). To know about our passion is to know more about our selves, but at the same time it implies overcoming the passion and letting it vanish.

An example of this could be a painter, who spends hours on his canvas to create a piece of art. His passion for painting allows him to be in touch with the world, to know his taste, hence himself and the nature within himself. He is not conscious of that urge that pushes him to paint, because if he would be conscious of it, it would become a choice and not a passion. The awareness of a passion dissolves its power, and turns it into any other activity (Meyer, 2000: 79). Thinking about painting, is not the same as painting, and a passion is what takes us outside of ourselves, while allowing us to connect with our true selves. The paradox of passion is therefore not resolved by the new take on the matter - it remains an insolvable issue.

Throughout History, several Discourses on passion can be observed, which show a great evolution from a passion as contrary to Reason, an alienation of the self towards a means for introspection. Along this evolution, most constants are present - passion remains a powerful force, mostly connected to people's emotions; an overwhelming force that both alienates us, but also allows for introspection. This late, somehow positive, understanding of passion will be carried in the Discourse that I observe nowadays.

On a different note, it is important to keep in mind that there are not only these few Discourses in the whole History. The texts I chose to highlight are crucial for the understanding of the "pre-modern" passions, as I wish to present it, but they do not represent the multiplicity of ideas that took place in the pre-modern times.

# 5. Modern Discourse on Passion

*"Passion is another one of those buzzwords. Everybody
uses it, very few know what they're talking about."*

Steven Kotler, Forbes, 2015

The occurrence of the term passion in modern Discourse has radically increased in the last twenty years (Newport, 2012). Many papers, articles and books discussing passion have been published since the start of the year 2000 (Vallerand and Houlfort, 2003; Marsh et al., 2013; Sheep, 2009; Meyer, 2000) and most business magazine tackled the issue of passion in some of their last volumes (Isenberg, 2010; Kibler, 2015; Dholakia, Herzenstein, and Sonenshein, 2015; Beaton, 2016; Henderson, 2016). Concurrently, CEO's and leaders, such as Punit Renjen (CEO of Deloitte), Ravin Gandhi (CEO of GMM), Prabakaran Murugaiah (founder of TechFetch), Scott Free (CEO of Lusardi Construction) or Johnny Schillereff (founder of Element) mentioned passion in their talks and articles as being essential to success.

A well known example is Steve Jobs and the talk on passion, which he held at Stanford University; a talk that has been seen over 24 million times on the internet, underlining the following idea:

"The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't
found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart,
you'll know when you find it." (Jobs, 2005)

It seems that the modern Discourse advises to look for one's passion and "not to settle", as Jobs would say, as it is a matter of the heart.

This Discourse on passion has several aspects: First, passion seems to be closely bound to people's identity and subjectivity. It becomes a way to express oneself as a unique human (Jobs, 2005). Second, knowing about one's passions, and one's identity should enable us to find fulfilling work and a feeling of wholeness (Sheep, 2009); a feeling known to be expected by the generation called "the Millenials" or "Generation Y" (Newport, 2012). Passion is related to doing

something *meaningful*, and therefore, have a greater motivation to achieve certain goals. Finally, the danger of obsessive passion is also part of a more progressive Discourse on passion (Sheep, 2009). The interest in work-life balance grows: people want to be able to detach their professional life from their personal life, while maintaining a healthy lifestyle (Pedersen, 2011). Those distinct but related Discourses are further developed in the following section.

## Passion and Work as Identity

> "*The concept that each of us is born with a fire burning in*
> *her belly that will drive a career has spread like a bad flu.*"
>
> (Hassler, 2005: 275)

The modern Discourse on passion entails the idea that knowing one's passions is directly linked to knowing oneself (Hassler, 2005: 275). While analysing the generation Y,[1] Hassler notices an important pressure toward finding one's passion, i. e. one's "purpose in life", and developing it into a career (Hassler, 2005: 276). The order is important here; one needs to first find out what is one's passion, and then a career that fits that specific passion. Somehow, passion is part of the individual's core identity, as it seems to precede his or her experience of the world. It should not be developed over time; it should be part of the subject's personality beforehand. This *passion craze* can be experienced as an important pressure among the young generation that somehow did not have the time to experience the workplace, but is expected to know exactly what they want to do and who they are (Hassler, 2005: 276).

Work has taken a central position within this modern Discourse on passion and identity. It has become difficult to differentiate what one does professionally from what one is, which has increased the quest for the perfect fit between passion and career (Konstam, 2015: 90). Hassler observes that:

> "The overemphasis on passion and the pressure we feel to do and have it
> all propels us into one of two states: either we put ourselves on an

[1] The Generation Y, also called « Generation Me » or « Millenials », represents the individuals born approximately between 1980 and 1995, entering the job market in the year 2000 and on.
[2] This phenomena can be neurologically explained by the limited capacity of human brains to

accomplishment timeline, or we waver because we don't know what we
want" (Hassler, 2005: 290)

The pressure to *find* one's passion or *be* passionate at work seems to push the young generation to constantly aim for more achievements or, if the quest is unsuccessful, feel confused and frustrated (Hassler, 2005: 290; Konstam, 2015: 90). It is part of their responsibility to "figure it out" and find the "right" job that suits their passion (Konstam, 2015: 91). A result of this eternal quest might be that young workers do not settle for jobs, and hope to find passion in the next professional experience.

Concurrently, the Discourse on authenticity at work illustrates the sudden interest organisations have for worker's identity and passions. Somehow, subjectivity has become an economical resource for most organizations (Pedersen, 2011: 65); employees are not only expected to be skilled, they are expected to be truly themselves at work. There is new interest in employees "instinct" (Pedersen, 2011: 66), in their capacity to be spontaneous, original, innovative and somehow, different from the crowd. Consequently, the focus seems to have shifted from a skill-based to a personality-based hiring process, following the idea that "cultural fit" and passions are more important than the know-hows. As Casserly claims:

"An employee who will grudgingly adopt a new database is not as
attractive as one who is truly passionate about learning new things"
(Casserly, 2012).

This type of discourse has spread in the business world in the last thirty years, implying an important pressure on young worker to develop their personal interests, social skills and passions.

As Sheep observes, the element of passion appears "where one's work and identity are not only congruent, but mutually energizing (synergistic)" (Sheep, 2009: 59). Somehow, passion has become the new motor for a high productivity in the XXI Century. On the one hand, being a passionate worker requires self-awareness, but on the other hand, it necessitates the capacity to lose oneself in the work and invest one's entire energy for a greater purpose. This capacity to enter a state of "flow", i. e. a state in which the whole self is engaged in an activity and

hours pass unnoticed, is frequently linked to a high level of productivity and creativity (Sheep, 2009: 63). In an article featured in Forbes, Kotler explains a few tips on how to become more productive through entering a state of flow (2015: 2), and one of his advices is to prioritize passion. As he explains:

> "The reason passion matters so much isn't fancy—it's neurological. Passion drives focus. Quite literally, we pay more attention to those things we care most about and this creates a ton of flow." (Kotler, 2015: 2)

Passion suddenly seems to be more than an activity one enjoys, but rather a way to transcend and reach other levels of consciousness, such as the *flow* (Kotler, 2015: 1).

The concept of flow has been popularised in the 90's by a Hungarian psychologist and philosopher called Csikszentmihalyi. In a TED talk hold in 2004, Csikszentmihalyi exposes his definition of flow, which has certain similarities with the idea of passion we observed, both in the pre-modern and modern Discourses:

> "You are in an ecstatic state to such a point that you feel as though you almost don't exist. (…) My hand seems devoid of myself, and I have nothing to do with what is happening. I just sit there watching it in a state of awe and wonderment" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2004)

It is interesting to note the aspect of detachment experienced by Csikszentmihalyi, while being in a flow. It is very similar to the idea of alienation, which was problematic in the pre-modern Discourse on passion (Meyer, 2000: 79). This idea of being outside of one's body, losing control, reminds the irrational aspect of passion, which was feared in ancient Greece and Christianity. Nowadays, this state of flow is encouraged, as it enables people to reach a state in which they are more creative and motivated.

The modern Discourse on passion and identity seems to take into account a certain risk of losing oneself to passion, but it also sees its potential source of

creativity and energy. The paradoxical idea that passion allows you to know yourself better, and be outside of yourself at the same time remains present (Csikszentmihalyi, 2004). While being closely linked to one's identity, passion implies a state in which the identity disappears into the unconscious.[2] Which also explains why someone, who is *passionate* about his work tends to forget basic needs such as eating or sleeping (Csikszentmihalyi, 2004).

**Passion and Meaningfulness**

The modern Discourse on passion stresses the fact that passion should be pursued in order to have a fulfilled life (Hassler, 2005; Jobs, 2005; Konstam, 2015; Wolf, 2007). The work of Susan Wolf underlines the importance of this feeling of fulfilment passions tends to arouse in us:

> "The fact that most of us would willingly put up with a great deal of
> stress, anxiety, and vulnerability to pain in order to pursue our passions
> can be seen as providing support for the idea that fulfilment is indeed a
> great and distinctive good in life" (Wolf, 2007: 82).

Passion is not described as easy, or without pain, but it is seen as a source of fulfilment. Fulfilment seems to appear when one does what one truly loves, and is involved in activities that one truly cares about (Wolf, 2007: 81). A feeling that should not be confused with pleasure, which can be found while riding a roller coaster, eating an ice-cream, or any activity involving momentary joy; even though a feeling of fulfilment frequently implies some sort of pleasure (Wolf, 2007: 82).

This view on passion as a means to a meaningful life is called the *fulfilment view* (Wolf, 2007: 82). It implies that if you are enrolled in a work that gives you a feeling of fulfilment, your life will be meaningful. A consequence of that view is that without passion, life is seen as a chain of meaningless pleasures and pains (Wolf, 2007: 83). The extremism and self-centred ethics implied in this view of meaningfulness should be criticized. The fulfilment view does not seem to take into

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[2] This phenomena can be neurologically explained by the limited capacity of human brains to process a great number of information (Csikszentmihalyi, 2004).

account any greater purpose than the fulfilment of a person's passion. As Wolf observes:

> "If, as the fulfilment view suggests, the only thing that matters is the subjective quality of one's life, then it shouldn't matter, in our assessments of possible lives, which activities give rise to that quality" (Wolf, 2007: 83).

Any type of activity, as long as it is someone's passion, gives meaning to that person's life. But it seems that a hope is underlined in this view: the hope that people can only truly be passionate about things that are larger than themselves. As Wolf underlines, one is not eternally passionate about one's goldfish, Sudokus or destruction. Most passion contain some sort of connection to the Other and a certain impact on others, which can be seen as positive for most people (Wolf, 2007: 88).

The Discourse on passion and meaningfulness is very present in the business world as well (Shaw, 2016; Wolf, 2007: 82; Vallerand et al. 2003: 192). As Chalofsky and Krishna explains:

> "The resurgence of interest of intrinsic factors such as meaning, purpose, spirituality, and commitment and the recent introduction of engagement has resulted in an increase in both the popular and scholarly literature concerning the role of work as a motivator in the organization" (2009: 190).

Passion is presented as a way to motivate employees and give meaning to their work, while enhancing their productivity; another aspect of the modern Discourse on passion.

**Passion and Motivation**

Some authors argue that passion leads to venture growth (Baum & Locke, 2004; Baum, Locke, & Smith, 2001), industrial success (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, 2009) and an overall satisfaction at work (Burke & Fiskenbaum, 2009). Beyond the fact that a passionate person might have a meaningful life, a passionate person seems to be more efficient in the business world. Passion has become a soft

skill that can be put on a résumé, as a new strength. Passion has become the new was to truly engage with one's work and therefore work in a more efficient way (or longer hours).

Some aspects of the post-industrial society might be responsible for this renewed interest in passion at work. Previously, the connection between people's work and its meaning was closely tied; as Chalofsky and Krishna say, "there was no separation of work from self, community, and life" (2009: 191). During the industrial time, an important change occurred; work was not seen as part of people's personal life and identity anymore; wage earner became a majority, hierarchies became clearer, and internal competition implied new rules within organisations and between employees (Chalofsky and Krishna, 2009: 191). Currently the number of employees working for virtual organisations has made this gap between work and community even larger. Work tends to be seen as more abstract than before and some researchers argue that it is why it has lost some of its meaning (Chalofsky and Krishna, 2009: 192; Sievers, 1986: 335).

The need for more passion and more personal engagement at work might be a response to this "meaningless economy" (Rushkoff, 2016). Passion for work has become part of a larger interest for human capital involvement, as Permarupan et al. claim:

> "No matter how much technology has made our lifestyle more
> comfortable, the function of an organization is heavily supported by
> human capital involvement." (2013: 89).

In an economy in which work often lacks meaning, passion seems to be the skill required to be able to invest oneself fully in an activity. Somehow, passion seems to ensure intrinsic motivation at work, which cannot be enhanced by bonuses or other perks; it implies a greater motivation, as employees feel personally involved in their work. As Burke et al. explains, "organizations need to unleash the talents and motivations of all their employees if they are to achieve peak performance" (2011: 21). This is in line with certain research that shows that passion promotes performance, decreases turn over, and enhances mental and physical health within an organisation (Forest et al, 2011: 28).

## Obsessive vs. harmonious passion

It is noticeable that passions are experienced in different ways and tend to be either positive or negative for individuals. As Aristotle argued, passion can be a source of energy and inspiration, as long as reason remains in control, the passion is not taken to an extreme (Meyer, 2000: 32). In their research, Vallerand and his colleagues developed a dualistic model to define two types of passion: the harmonious and obsessive passion (Vallerand & Houlfort, 2003; Vallerand & Miquelon, 2007). In order to nuance the overly positive Discourse on passion, they explained the danger of certain passions, which are not internalized by the person, or based on controlled reasons. Vallerand et al. stand by the idea that passions are important and valued activities bringing energy and meaning to individuals and their work, but they underline the danger of a passion, which overtakes someone's control, and is not coherent with the rest of his or her identity (Vallerand et al., 2003).

Harmonious passion necessitates its internalization, which occurs when people feel "autonomous, connected, and competent" (Mageau et al., 2009: 604). As discussed in a previous section: When a passion is perfectly internalized, a person can experience a state of *flow*, which allows people to engage with an extended focus and for long hours on an activity, while remaining in control. They can feel a desire to engage with the activity, but the capacity to withdraw, if needed (Mageau et al., 2009: 604). As Mageau et al. explain:

> "People with a harmonious passion are autonomous in their regulations,
> and they partake in their passionate activity as well as in other activities
> with an openness that is conducive to positive experiences" (Mageau et
> al., 2009: 604).

An important trait of the harmonious passion is the capacity to experience the passion while staying open and enjoying other activities. People experiencing harmonious passion are able to engage in an activity while staying flexible and conscious of what they are doing.

Contrarily to an harmonious passion, an obsessive passion is hypothetically due to intra- or interpersonal pressure that has been internalized. For example, a passion could be pursued in order to improve one's self-esteem, or to better

integrate in a social group. It is based on a lack of fulfilment in general, which often occurs in "non-supportive environment", as Hodgins and Knee would argue (2002: 87). This type of environment obliges the individual to protect his or her self-worth by letting a passion take over their autonomy (Mageau et al., 2009: 605). As Hodgins and Knee suggest, obsessive passions drive people into:

> "doing particular activities in particular ways; being perceived by others
> in particular ways; or perhaps most importantly, perceiving themselves
> in certain ways" (Hodgins and Knee, 2002: 91).

Obsessive passion seems to be a way to deal with the highly individualistic environment that work life has turned into in the last decades (Hassler, 2005: 266).

### "Follow your passion"- generation

The pressure experienced by young workers to find a job that suits their passion has increased in the last twenty years. Hassler describes it as the *passion-finding trend,* which causes many members of the generation Y to enter a crisis in their twenties (2005: 276). The importance of a passionate lifestyle has become the new priority for the new generation, and it is likely that it has pushed many workers into developing obsessive passions.

The new societal pressure towards a passionate lifestyle can be compared to a form of neo-normative control, in which organizations emphasize the importance of authenticity and fun at work (Fleming and Sturdy, 2009: 569). As Fleming and Sturdy explains, workers "ought to express more of their true selves by breaking the traditional work/non-work boundary, particularly by being playful and having fun at work". This new form of control encourages passions, such as sexuality, consumption and leisure at the work place, in order to integrate the whole worker identity into work. The lack of psychological distance experienced by the workers has become a resource for most organisations and a way to increase their output (Fleming and Sturdy, 2009: 571).

The presence of a strong and positive Discourse on passion at work is undeniable, but it is also criticized my some authors (Dholakia, et al. 2015; Manville: 2015; Hassler, 2005; Kiefer, 2015; Newport, 2012). An opposing

Discourse has started to spread in the last ten years, denouncing the ideology of passion at work. Hassler, for example, denounces the fact that the modern Discourse on passion sets too high expectations (Hassler, 2005: 53). As Kiefer puts it:

> "Passion isn't a requirement. Despite what is suggested in the popular press, the founders of many, perhaps most, successful firms didn't have passion at the beginning, and you don't have to have it either" (Kiefer, 2015: 1).

This Discourse seems to be a reaction to the "popular press", emphasizing the risk of waiting for a passion, instead of acting and discovering what one likes over time. Passion is something that slowly grows, according to Kiefer and others (Kiefer, 2015: 1; Dholakia, et al. 2015). It is therefore extremely hard to know one's passion in advance and find a job that suits it perfectly.

Newport categorises the search for a passion as *misinformation* (Newport, 2012). Because the phrase "follow your passion" has started to spread in the nineties before peaking in the year 2000 (see figure 1), the young generation has been misled into thinking that passion should necessarily be part of their work life.

Fig. 1: Occurrence of the phrase "Follow your passion" in printed English from 1975 to 2008, calculated by Google's N-Gram Viewer.[3]
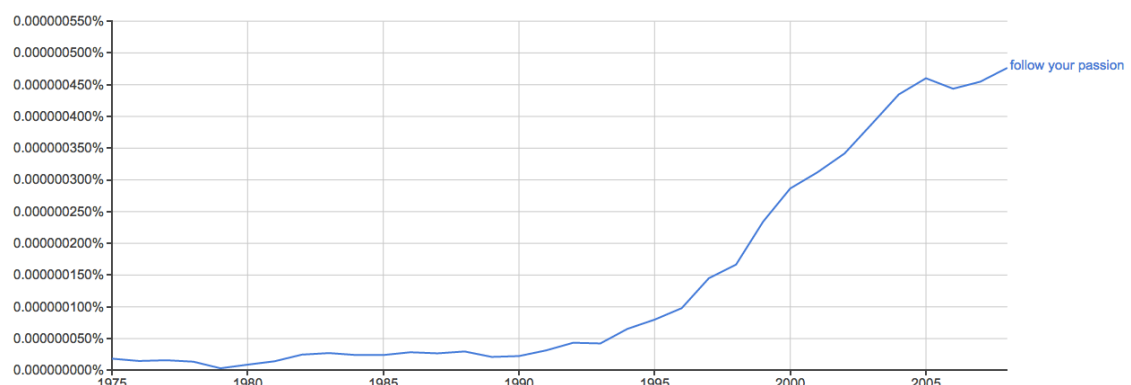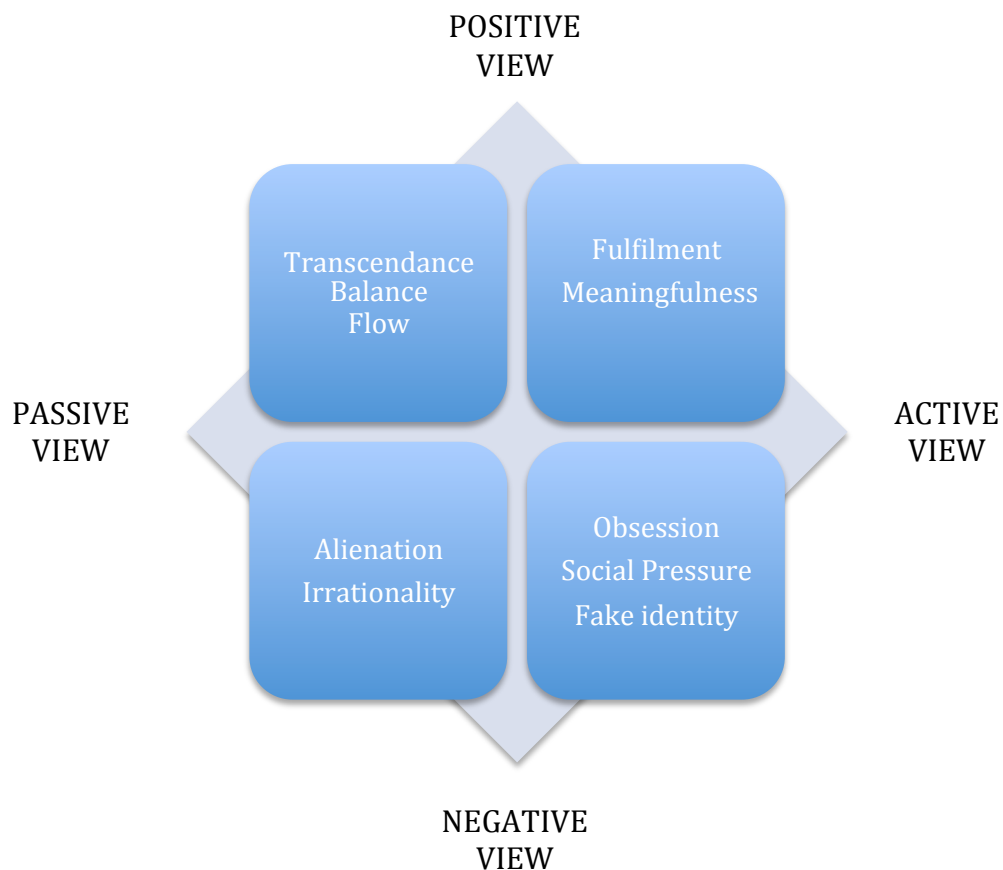
The problem is, as Newport puts it, that the verb "follow" implies an identification of the passion beforehand; one needs to find a job that fits a pre-existing passion. This implies that one should love a job from the very first day, which is very rare. Furthermore, passion can be seen as overrated, Dholakia, et al. argue that it is more important to be well prepared or have the adequate skills for a job, than being passionate about it. As they say, "both entrepreneurs and their audiences should be aware that without preparedness, passion is worth little" (Dholakia, et al. 2015).

Similarly to the pre-modern Discourse on passion, the modern Discourse on passion gathers different point of view concerning its impact on the individual. In the following section, I will build a matrix exposing those different opinions on the subject.

## 6. Matrix of Discourses

In the pre-modern Discourse on passion, different conceptions of passion oppose each other, and evolve over time. The same can be observed in the modern Discourse on passion. An important difference between those two Discourses remains noticeable: the pre-modern Discourse defines passion as something *passive*, something that happens to the individual without any control or decision of his own. As in the modern Discourse, passion is seen as an *active* choice, it is a way in which people engage in an activity, which is actively part of their identity. In addition, both pre-modern and modern Discourse on passion have mixed opinions concerning the impact of passions on individuals; some theories describe passion as a positive and nurturing affect, as others see it as alienating and harmful.

The following chart helps us to visualise the different views on, and understanding of passion.

POSITIVE VIEW

Transcendance
Balance
Flow

Fulfilment
Meaningfulness

PASSIVE VIEW

ACTIVE VIEW

Alienation
Irrationality

Obsession
Social Pressure
Fake identity

NEGATIVE VIEW

There are many different ways in which passion and its understanding can be described. I decided to limit my analysis to four angles that, in my opinion, cover most of the pre-modern and modern Discourse on passion.

The first is the *passive-negative* view on passion. This view is mainly inspired by the pre-modern times; it has been present in ancient Greece, and in Christianity, as we discussed in chapter 4. In this view, passion is an overwhelming affect that takes over control and alienates individuals. It is therefore an affect that should be avoided as much as possible, as it takes individuals away from the essential (cf. Plato, Augustine). The second angle, called the *passive-positive* view, is also influenced by the pre-modern Discourse on passion. Authors such as Aristotle, Machiavelli, Smith or Freud have greatly influenced this view of passion, defining it as a trait of human being that should be embraced and respected rather than repulsed. Passion is described as positive and enlightening, as long as it is not brought to an unhealthy extreme.

The third view is the *active-negative* one; present it the modern Discourse, it sees passion as a dangerous choice, due to the obsession it can create, and the lack of control it may cause. In this view, passion is often due to social pressure, to the obligation to define oneself in a certain way, or to a complete lack of control over one's life. Workaholism or the obsession over social medias can be seen as examples of this type of passion.

The forth and last view on passion is the *active-positive* one. A widely spread view in the 21$^{st}$ Century; in the business press, the literature and especially among the generation Y. According to this view, passion is a sign of fulfilment and realisation. It is associated with creativity, originality, authenticity and a feeling of control and happiness.

In the following section, I describe how these different views of passion can be observed in a local and present-day setting. The matrix and the long-range analysis that have been done in the chapter 4 and 5 and 6 will unable us to look at a specific situation with a conceptual framework, and extrapolate a Discourse out of a contextualised discourse.

# 7. Case analysis

The pre-modern and modern Discourse on passion influences the way in which young employees view passion and are influenced by it nowadays. At the same time, the close-range discourse influences the large Discourse, as it is where it continuously starts anew.

In this section, I describe the case of Locado, a young company based in Copenhagen, and analyse five interviews I have made there. The goal of this close-range discourse analysis is to understand the relationship between the localised discourse on passion and the common Discourse on passion, i. e. the framework developed in chapter 6.

Throughout this section, three types of discourse are analysed in relation to the conceptual framework and a new type of discourse is observed. The first type of discourse contains the employees' ways of understanding the term *passion*. These understandings are closely related to the modern and/or pre-modern Discourse on passion, while offering new nuances and distinctions. The second type of discourse

contains the active views, involving active/positive and active/negative views of passion. The third type of discourse contains the passive view of passion, which is more rare but appears in several quotes - involving as well some passive/positive and a passive/negative view of passion. Finally, a somehow "innovative" discourse on passion involving *protection mechanisms* is observed; a discourse that is somehow outside the conceptual framework developed in chapter 6.

## Case Description

The interviews were made in a company called *Locado*, counting fifteen full-time and twenty part-time employees. This organisation creates and develops an application enabling its users to buy and sell used items in their neighbourhood. The concept is very similar to a social media, as the users communicate and share their taste and interests on the platform.

The company is based on a fairly flat hierarchy, enabling each employee to communicate directly with the founder and the main stakeholders. Employees are free and encouraged to take initiatives and share their ideas with the rest of the group. They have their domain of expertise, but they are often asked to go out of their specialty and help on diverse tasks. There are rarely any specific tasks defined by a superior, employees are responsible for their own projects and encouraged to start new ones continuously.

Most tasks achieved by the full-time employees at Locado are creative tasks, such as redesigning certain features of the application, developing new payment system or solving customers' issues. The employees are used to brainstorm in small groups and develop ideas on how to improve the product.

The work rhythm is fairly flexible; employees may come to work when they see fit and work from home if needed. It is easy to take a day off for personal reason and recommended to spend time with one's family and/or for a hobby. In other words, private life is highly respected and welcome in the work environment. Families are welcome to visit, and many social events are organised in the office, to enable the workers and their friends to gather and celebrate. As many other young companies, Locado encourages employees to be themselves at work, find their own work life-balance, and define how they want to contribute to the company.

In this liberal and creative context, it is interesting to ask employees if they feel passionate about their work, why it is so and what it means to them to be passionate. I have asked those questions to five employees at Locado in order to understand their view on the subject. Among those employees were a software developer (Alex), a business developer (Thure), a designer (Michael), a co-founder with IT background (Jonathan), and a community manager (Sarah).[4] It is important to note that these five employees are also my co-workers, and our professional or somehow personal relationship might have influenced their answers and reactions to my questions (see appendix 1).

## The Understandings of Passion

The employees at Locado seem confident while explaining their own understanding of passion. They know exactly what passion means to them, and if they have it or not. However, the answers they give show a multiplicity of understandings. Four main understandings can be named as follows: passion as love, passion as meaning, passion as pride and passion as wholeness. All somehow inspired by the modern and pre-modern Discourse on passion, these understandings of the term add nuances to the long-range Discourse we discussed in chapter 4 and 5.

*Passion as love* has been expressed by Sarah, the community manager. As she explains it:

> "It [passion] is like being in love with what you do. I feel the same
> feeling of excitement in my stomach. You can't wait to do it. It gives
> you energy" (Sarah, Appendix 1, p. ii).

In this view, passion has a physical impact on individuals; it is an affect that one can feel internally, alike a romantic feeling. As Sarah describes it, there is an urge towards a specific activity. Passion seems to be an overwhelming affect, taking over some part of the individual's control, and simultaneously bringing energy and strength. This is fairly similar to an active/positive view of passion, which is widely spread in the modern Discourse, as we discussed in chapter 4 and 6. Passion is seen as a powerful and meaningful force that enables individuals to realise themselves

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[4] The names are invented

and enter a state of *flow*. At the same time, this view is also inspired by a passive/positive view on passion, which underlines the overwhelming effect of passion. The feeling of "urge" felt by Sarah can be interpreted as a lack of control, or a lack of rationality; an idea mainly present in the pre-modern Discourse on passion (cf. Aristotle, Plato).

Altogether Sarah sees passion as a very positive affect, and she is pleased to be passionate about her work at Locado (Appendix 1, p. iii). However, passion was not always part of her work life, as she explains:

> "I felt like such a tiny bit of [my former] organisation. I would not make a difference whatsoever. This feeling makes it impossible for me to be passionate about my job. That is also why I like a start-up, because the results are not far from what you do. It drives me when I can feel that I'm doing something that is producing results." (Sarah, Appendix 1, p. iii)

Apparently the way in which the work is structured at Locado enables her to be more passionate than the type of structure she had experienced in her former work. The capacity to have an impact on her work was lacking in her previous work place and this capacity is a precondition for passion in her view. I describe this understanding: *passion as meaning*, as the concept of meaningfulness is at the core. This view is connected to an active/positive view on passion, which is often observed nowadays. Such an understanding can be used to promote flat hierarchies and flexible structures, such as the one commonly observed in start-ups. It seems that the individuals who are looking for a passionate work, look for a work in which they can have a significant impact, both on the product and the people around them. In the same line of thought, Jonathan declared:

> "I think it is cool to build something that has meaning for other people. So I work a lot, but I don't really consider it work" (Jonathan, Appendix 1, p. vii)

The notion of meaning appears again as a condition for passion, but this time, work has to be meaningful to others, i. e. the meaning needs to be shared. This is a new aspect of passion, which seems to be somehow detached from the individual and the ego, unlike the modern Discourse on passion. It is an active/positive understanding of passion, but it elevates the modern Discourse on passion to a new level: the level of empathy and social impact.

Agreeing with this view, Thure thinks that passion emerges "when you try to go outside of yourself in order to achieve common goals" (Thure, Appendix 1, p. i). This feeling of common goals appeared several times throughout the interviews (Thure, Appendix 1, p. i; Jonathan, Appendix 1, p. vii), which seems to be in line with the active/positive idea of passion, but new to the common Discourse on passion. Passion seems to be more collective, and bound to external goals, then the way in which it is exposed in the literature and the media nowadays. Passion is now related to the impact one has on others; not only on the impact one has on oneself. Michael expressed this feeling as well:

> "Yes, I would say that I am passionate. It's important to me that my work is functional and that people like using what I do. That's what makes me thrilled about doing stuff; when I see people liking it and using it everyday." (Michael, Appendix 1, p. vi)

Passion is here bound to a strong feeling of meaning and gratitude. Michael seems to need a positive feedback from his users, and a feeling that his work has meaning in order to be *thrilled*, which is a feeling close to the idea of flow (cf. Csikszentmihalyi). Agreeing with this idea of impact, Jonathan describes it as a *drive:*

> "When I work at Locado, I try to surpass myself. Breaking some rules, trying to make people see things differently, that's my drive; changing the way people do things" (Jonathan, Appendix 1, p. viii).

This idea to surpass oneself and to go outside of oneself is inspired by the pre-modern idea of passion as *transcendence*. It is an example in which the concept of

active passion and passive passion are collaborating. By accepting the external power passion has on him, Jonathan consciously accepts to feel outside of himself. It is still part of a positive view of passion, but the role of the subject has become both active and passive. One embraces the force of the passion, and the fact that it takes us beyond oneself. A discourse that is far from the modern Discourse analysed in chapter 5, and gives us new insight on how passion is seen nowadays.

Another aspect of passion rarely mentioned in the modern Discourse is the idea of *pride*, expressed by Alex (Appendix 1, p. v). In his understanding of passion, it appears while doing an activity one is proud of, such as creating a new feature that changes the entire experience of the app and makes it easier to use, as he explains in the interview (Alex, Appendix 1, p. v). Passion is here closely related to the individual and his or her own feeling of satisfaction and worth. It is compatible with the active/positive view on passion, as one stays in control of the passion, and it brings a positive feeling of satisfaction. This view also brings the interesting element of self-esteem or self-worth. Passion is here connected to an activity that generates pride; it enhances the individual's feeling of worthiness (Cambridge Dictionary Online[5]). This type of discourse underlines the inherent value attached to being passionate, which is very similar to the modern Discourse on passion and the encouragement for "following one's passion".

Finally, Michael is the only employee discussing the possible danger of passion and the wholeness it implies. As he explains:

> "You need to have some level of passion in what you are doing, but I
> think interest and love is more correct or good to have than passion.
> You can enjoy and love what you are doing but it does not have to be
> your whole life" (Michael, Appendix 1, p. vi).

An interesting saying, as it implies that a real passion engages *your whole life*. The concept of wholeness is not obvious in the modern Discourse on passion, but it is comparable to the fear of losing control, and being overwhelmed, which is present in the pre-modern Discourse on passion. It is an example of unbalanced passion, as

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[5] Definition of pride in the Cambridge Dictionary Online: "Feelings of your own worth and respect for yourself", URL: http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pride

the Plato would refer to (cf. Chapter 4). This fear is reappearing nowadays with the concept of "work-life balance", which underlines the importance of balancing one's passions for work, family and other activities. This movement towards a more balanced life implies a fulfilling work, as well as an enriched private life (cf. Pedersen). Passion might jeopardize the possibility of such a balance in Michael view (Michael, Appendix 1, p. vi).

To conclude this section, the multiple understandings of passion seem to be inspired by a modern and pre-modern Discourse on passion, as well as new insights on passion in the current work life. Passion as love, passion as meaning and passion as pride represent the understandings that are mostly influenced by an active/positive view on passion, as the last one; passion as wholeness, is mostly influenced by the passive/negative view on passion.

## The Discourse On Active Passion And Its Impact

The employees at Locado seem to agree on the existence of a social Discourse on passion. They recognize that their surrounding and the media often refer to passion, mostly as a positive trait, but also as a potential danger. They can sense that the term passion has taken more and more importance in the last years (Appendix 1, p. i-iii), and they agree that it somehow affects their relationship to their work. In this section, I will describe the situations in which passion is seen as an active choice, and how this impacts the individuals. There were three main discourses in this context, such as the one on empowerment, self-branding and instability, which were directly linked to an active Discourse on passion.

The first one is the view on passion and its Discourse as *empowerment*. It is expressed by Thure, the business developer, who argues that "the discourse on passion empowers [him] at the moment" (Appendix 1, p. ii). Even though he agrees that it is hard to find a work place in which one can feel passionate, he claims that he has found it at Locado (Appendix 1, p. ii). In this context, the modern Discourse on passion is seen as an encouragement to look for a work in which one feels involved and satisfied.

Some employees at Locado agree on the fact that their parents had different expectations towards their jobs. The notion of a "good job" was defined by a company's reputation, a high salary and security (Sarah, Appendix 1, p. iv;

Jonathan, Appendix 1, p. ix). Such conditions seem superficial for most employees at Locado; their relationship towards their colleagues, the freedom they experience and the impact they can have on their work are more important than security and a high salary (Sarah, Appendix 1, p. iv; Jonathan, Appendix 1, p. ix). They also agree that this vision of the work place, as an environment in which you can be happy and fulfilled, is influenced by a strong modern Discourse (Thure, Appendix 1, p. i; Sarah, Appendix 1, p. iii). As Sarah expresses it:

> "You end your studies with a feeling that now you really have to get practical and do some things that will change the world" (Sarah, Appendix 1, p. iii)

This type of discourse is bound to an active/positive view of passion, in which passion gives energy and strength to tackle new challenges. It gives the new generation the courage to leave a work place that does not give them satisfaction. As Sarah describes:

> "Recently I quit my job, without having another one, and my parents could not sleep for two weeks" (Appendix 1, p. iv).

It is difficult to judge if this type of empowerment is beneficial or not. The older generation might have been more grateful for having a work place, as the generation Y expects more, and agrees on taking risks in order to reach those expectations.

The second discourse that appears several times is about *self-branding*. The modern Discourse on passion seems to pressure the employees at Locado, and probably many others, to brand themselves as "passionate workers". This pressure has increased since the appearance of Facebook, Instagram and other social medias. As Sarah explains:

> "I think there's a huge pressure to find a job that you love. Because you see all those hash tags "Love my job", "Love what I do". You see that

and you feel a great pressure to brand yourself through your job as well"
(Appendix 1, p. iv).

As we have observed in chapter 5, the term "passion" and its use has exponentially increased in the last twenty years (cf. Google's N-Gram Viewer).[6] The use of social media to expose one's achievements and passion has increased the possibilities to share and expose one's success to the world, and by the same token, the pressure towards *living the dream*. It seems that it is not sufficient to feel satisfied with one's work, there is a pressure towards doing something different; something that suits one's specific interests. Thure expresses this opinion by saying:

"The social media pushes people to communicate the top two percent of their feelings, so that makes it even harder, when you look at yourself. You feel that others are very passionate about what they are doing" (Appendix 1, p. i).

This tendency to compare oneself to the others is especially strong nowadays due to the modern communication tools. It is maybe one of the reasons why the generation Y feels the need to have a particularly intense career, as they have to compete with the "top two percent" of their friends and followers. If this is motivating or setting false expectations is a discussion, which will be further developed in chapter 9.

It is regularly observed that this hope and quest for a passionate career is followed by an "anti-climax" (Sarah, Appendix 1, p. iii). Somehow, reality appears to be less glamorous than the content shared in the social media. Sarah remembers the time after the end of her study and explains:

"We were like "*I'm going to find my dream job and really take over the world with my special talent and my interests*". But now we realize that a job is a job and yes, you get tired and you get stressed out. So it has been an anti-climax for many of us, and especially for me with my last job!" (Appendix 1, p.iii).

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[6] URL Link to the calculation : https://books.google.com/ngrams/

It is interesting to note that this view of passion as a "must have" is very negative and a certain cynicism can be sensed. There is disgust towards the "follow your passion" Discourse (cf. chapter 5; Hassler), as if it would be a false advertising. This perspective is inspired by an active/negative view of passion, in which passion is understood as an active choice, but its pursuit leads to disappointments and disempowerment.

Sarah expresses the frustration she feels when she sees people spreading the news of their passionate life on the social media. She tends to believe that they exaggerate, that they "fake" their passion. But simultaneously, she admits that "maybe it's just because [she is] jealous" (Appendix 1, p. iii). Apparently, a part of her still would like to be one of the few, who manages to turn a passion into a career.

As Jonathan explains, the people who manage to find their passion at work tend to be seen as adventurous, or risk-takers. In his view, passion is a *risky choice*:

> "My network does not understand that I would make a risky choice to
> be able to work independently on my project. My network is
> comfortable with having a fix salary, coming home every day at 4 pm
> and relaxing with the family, even if it is a boring job" (Appendix 1, p.
> viii).

In this context, a new discourse appears, which has not been observed as part of the modern or pre-modern Discourse on passion: a discourse on passion as *instability*. It is possible that the quest for a passionate job is less secure than the quest for a stable and regularly paid job, but the Discourse on passion does not underline that aspect. Jonathan seems to see instability as a trade-off for passion, as he says:

> "Going to Danske Bank offers you a lot of security, because they are
> never going to go bankrupt, as start-ups might in 3 months. But I would
> prefer that; have less salary just to be able to work outside the box. It's
> like with colouring books, I always rather go outside the lines"
> (Appendix 1, p. ix).

In Jonathan's discourse, passion seems to represent creativity and instability at the same time. In order to "work outside the box", Jonathan needs to accept the possibility that his company can go bankrupt anytime. It does not seem to be a problem for him, but rather for his surrounding. The pressure he feels has been the opposite of the one felt by the other employees at Locado. He feels that there is a pressure towards security and stability at the work place. It might be caused by the fact that Jonathan is a few years older than the rest of the team and has a child to support financially. A shift in perspectives and Discourse might appear when responsibilities for a family and potentially a mortgage take place. As he explains:

> "I always have been quite adventurous, so I'm not afraid of taking risks.
> But of course, you have to think more about it when you have children"
> (Jonathan, Appendix 1, p. ix).

Jonathan's discourse is in line with an active/negative and an active/positive view of passion. Passion is seen as a choice, which is exciting and bound with creativity, but at the same time, passion is risky and should not be followed if other people, such as family members, are involved.

The discourse on passion as empowerment, self-branding and instability were in line with the idea of passion as an active choice. Even if pressured by society, passion is pursued by employees with the hope of being part of the few that live out of it. The modern Discourse on passion and its praise are seen as positive in the empowerment view, negative in the self-branding view and inexistent in the instability view. This shows the different reactions people have towards the large-range Discourse on passion; some embrace it, some protect themselves through cynicism and others are more influenced by a parallel Discourse, which make them fear passion even more. To use the same conceptual framework, those different views could be presented as follows:
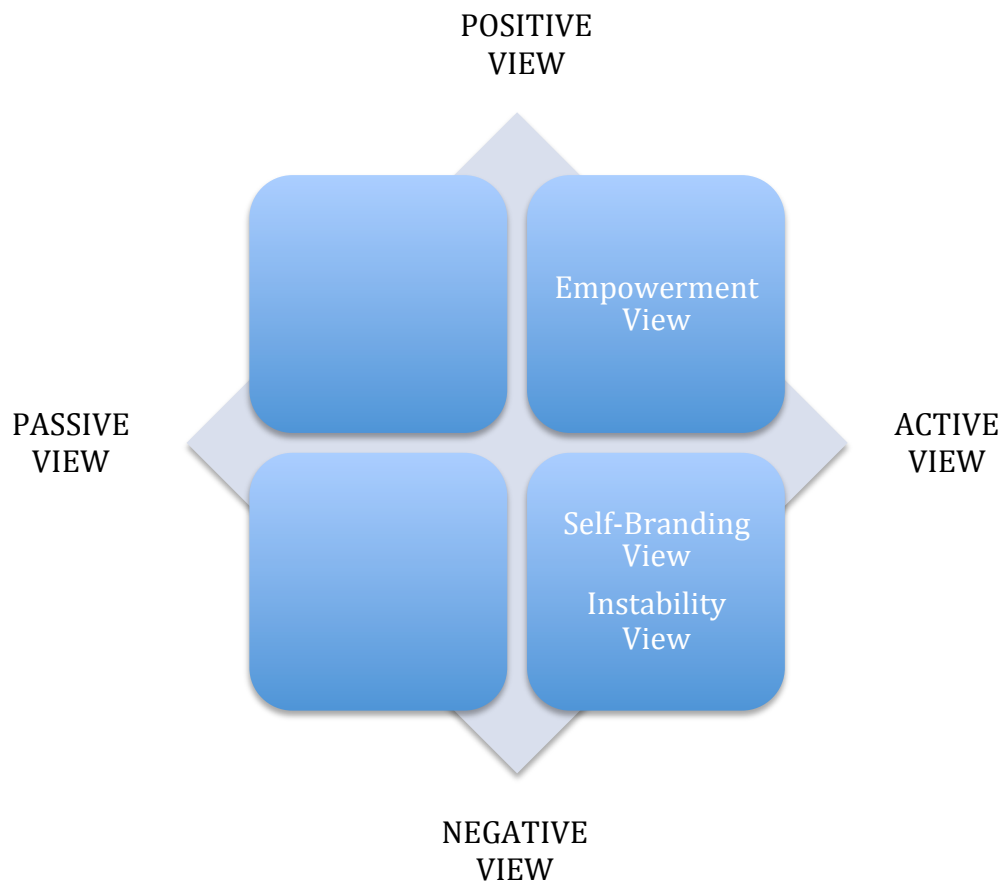
The empowerment view belongs to an active/positive understanding of passion, the self-branding view belongs to an active/negative understanding of passion and the instability view is seen as active/negative, because it is an choice, even though it is influenced by a concurrent Discourse and it sees passion as an instable, i. e. negative affect.

We will observe in the following section parts of the discourse that define passion as a passive affect, and therefore have a different impact on individuals.

**The Discourse On Passive Passion And Its Impact**

The discourse hold by the employees at Locado is mostly influenced by a modern Discourse, and an active view on passion. Nevertheless, three particular discourses seem inclined to a pre-modern conception of passion, in which passion takes over control and tends to be overwhelming. These discourses can be named as following: passion as overwhelming, passion as omnipresent and passion as flow, i. e. source of energy.

Passion as an overwhelming affect is somehow coupled to the concept of obsessive passions and the need for a work-life balance, as explained in chapter 5. Michael, the designer, was most sensitive to this idea, as he describes:

> "I have my doubts towards the word *passion*, towards the idea that people need to be insanely in love with their jobs. To be able to work here for example and be a good worker, you need time off" (Michael, Appendix 1, p. vi).

Michael seems to fear the overwhelming effect of passion on individuals and their work. He doubts the common Discourse on passion, and argues that one should be able to take time off, to be completely detached from one's work. The use of the term "insanely" shows his aversion towards passion, which to him creates a *dangerously close* relationship between a worker and his job. Michael argues for a more balanced life, in which interests are worthier than passion, as he says:

> "I think interest and love are more correct or good to have than passion. You can enjoy and love what you are doing but it does not have to be your whole life" (Michael, Appendix 1, p. vi).

This idea that a real passion takes over your *whole life* is inspired by a passive view on passion, in which passion overwhelms individuals and make them unable to be reasonable anymore. Michael fears that idea of being overwhelmed and wishes to keep a sane distance with his work, as he explains:

> "Sometimes I work a lot and get closer to [work] somehow. But often I like to take time off. I enjoy my time off. When I'm home I tend not to think too much about work" (Michael, Appendix 1, p. vi).

This discourse insinuates that real passion is a continuous activity that cannot be paused. Michael tries to keep space in which work is not involved and there is no need to think about it. He thinks that being deeply passionate about one's work makes this type of detachment impossible (Michael, Appendix 1, p. vi).

A theory that appears in Alex' discourse as well, as he claims to be passionate about his job, and therefore cannot fully let it go. But contrarily to Michael, Alex seems to have a more positive discourse. He sees passion as omnipresent but he does not fear that presence. As he says:

> "I think about [my work] all the time. I also think about other stuff when I'm off, but [work] is always on the back of my head." (Alex, Appendix 1, p. iv)

As long as work is related to his passions and his identity, thinking about it while being at home or with his family does not seem to disturb him. As he says: "I would not need to have [passion], but I love to have it" (Alex, Appendix 1, p. v). He thinks positively of passion, even though it seems that his passion for work leads him to think about it all the time. He does not see it as problematic because it is related to a work he is passionate about. Somehow, Alex allows his passion for work to take over some part of his control. He does not choose consciously to think of work, but it is "always on the back of [his] head" (Alex, Appendix 1, p. iv).

A last discourse inspired by Thure is the one on passion as an *energizing* affect. This discourse sees passion as an overwhelming but motivational force. Embracing his passion, Thure let it inspire him to achieve more and engage fully in his work. As Thure describes:

> "Yesterday evening at 11 pm, I felt like I wanted to go back to the office. Sometimes, everything is going well, you are in a flow, you watch talks that inspire you and you want to do more…" (Thure, Appendix 1, p. i).

Thure feels the urge sometimes to do more for Locado, to engage further with his work, even though it is not expected from him at that precise moment (Thure, Appendix 1, p. i). The passion he experiences gives him ideas and inspires him to do more. Thure embraces this passion and sees it as a positive affect, as it enables him to reach a feeling of flow (cf. Csikszentmihalyi). This feeling seems to appear when "everything is going well", when he feels comfortable with his tasks and

fulfilled by them. This flow enables Thure to be inspired and feel good about what he does. As discussed in chapter 5, the idea of flow is very present in the modern Discourse on passion, and is inspired by the pre-modern idea of losing control and entering a different state of mind (cf. Meyer).

The three types of discourses inspired by a passive view can be represented in the matrix presented in chapter 6. The discourse on passion as overwhelming is part of a passive/negative view of passion, as the discourse on passion as omnipresent and the discourse on passion as energizing are part of the passive/positive view of passion.

POSITIVE
VIEW

Energizing view
Omnipresent view

PASSIVE
VIEW

ACTIVE
VIEW

Overwhelming view

NEGATIVE
VIEW
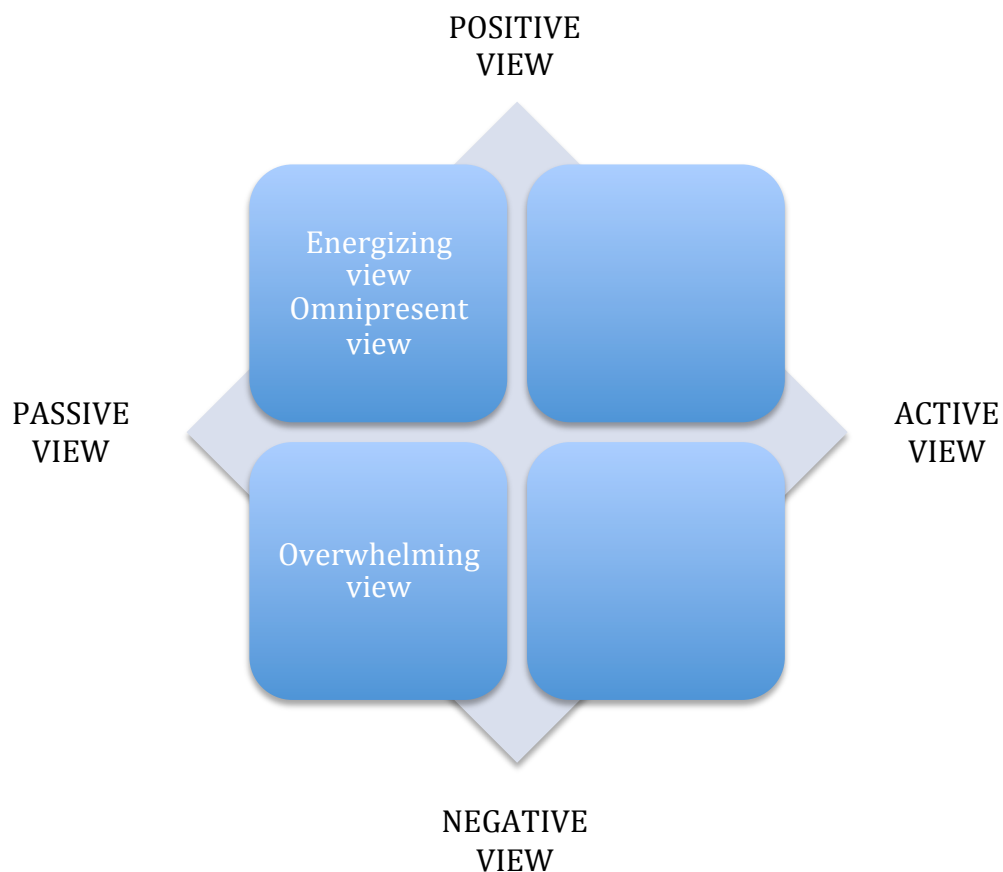
The choice of putting the omnipresent view within the positive area can be discussed. Alex describes Passion as a chance, and a consequence of passion is the omnipresence of the work in his life. He did not judge this presence as problematic, but it might be the case in the long run. This discussion is related to the idea of

work-life balance and the need for "time off". This discussion will be further developed in chapter 9. In the coming section, a new type of discourse will be analysed: the discourses on protection mechanisms.

## The Discourse On Protection Mechanisms

Several discourses have mentioned ways in which one can protect oneself from the modern Discourse on passion. Three of them can be observed in particular: the discourse on doubt, the discourse on passion as secondary, and the discourse on escaping social media. Those three discourses all describe a way in which the employees at Locado liberate themselves from the modern Discourse on passion.

The discourse on doubts has been observed in the previous section and mainly expressed by Michael. As he describes, one should have doubts about the term *passion*. He sees passion as a "buzzword" (cf. Hassler), which should not be taken too seriously. As he mentions:

> "I have my doubts towards the word passion, towards the idea that
> people need to be insanely in love with their jobs" (Michael, Appendix
> 1, p. vi).

By not believing in the need for passion, Michael distanced himself from the modern Discourse on passion, and protects himself by the same token. He acknowledges the existence of such a Discourse, as he claims:

> "I actually think that's quite a big thing today, that you have to enjoy
> and love your work, and be really into what you're doing" (Michael,
> Appendix 1, p. vi).

He does not refute the existence of a social pressure, but he protects himself from this pressure by doubting the trustworthiness of the common Discourse. By doing so, he allows himself to lower his expectations and truly enjoy his work. As he mentions:

"You have to be humble if you have a job, and be happy about what you
are doing, especially in the start-up industry. You need to enjoy that you
have so many possibilities" (Michael, Appendix 1, p. vi).

The gratitude he expresses shows that he is not only being cynical. Michael protects himself from the common Discourse by doubting it, but he is not rejecting the concept of passion or joy at work.

The discourse on the secondary role of passion has been brought up by Alex. In his view, passion is not a very important thing to have while working. As he says, while discussing new hire:

"At some point [passion] becomes less important. As long as [the
employees] do what they are expected to do. Especially when it comes
to developers. We could have developers that are not that passionate as
long as they do what we expect from them" (Alex, Appendix 1, p. v).

This statement might be influenced by the fact that he does not talk about himself, but about new hire. But he also states that he likes to be passionate about his job, but do not need it. This type of distancing allows him to be less influenced by the modern Discourse on passion, as he sees passion as a "nice to have" rather than a "must have". Agreeing with this point of view, Michael said:

"I don't think that [passion] is that necessary. You need to have some
level of interest in what you are doing, but I think interest and love is
more correct or good to have than passion." (Appendix 1, p. vi)

It seems that Alex would define passion as secondary and set a higher priority on skills and knowledge, as Michael claims that interest and love should be the first priority. In both cases, passion is taking off its pedestal, and seen as either unnecessary, or too intense.

Thure, one of the youngest employees at Locado, expresses the last type of protection mechanism called: *escaping social media*. His discourse acknowledges

the existence of a social pressure and general Discourse on passion, but he seems to actively protect himself from it. As he explains:

> "I try to keep away from everything that is social media. Because I feel like I would start comparing. But since I came here, I compare myself less. I guess it's because I like it here" (Thure, Appendix 1, p. i).

Thure has actively decided that he should spend less time on the social media in order to be less influenced by the common Discourse on passion. He seems to distrust social media and accuse them to show only the best part of people's lives. As he says:

> "The social media pushes people to communicate the top 2% of their feelings. So that makes it even harder, when you look at yourself…"
> (Thure, Appendix 1, p. i).

As a member of the generation Y, Thure experiences an important pressure to expose his life and compare it with the others on social media (cf. Hassler). It is interesting to note that he and probably others are protecting themselves from this pressure by escaping the social media. Thure explains that he uses a Chrome extensions[7] called "News Feed Eradicator for Facebook" in order to hide his Facebook feed. Instead of the normal feed filled with his friends' posting, Thure only sees a quote (Thure, Appendix 1, p. i). By doing that, he protects himself from unconstructive and stressful comparison with his friends, and a confrontation with the continuous Discourse pushing him to "follow his passion" (cf. chapter 5).

Another way to avoid or protect oneself from the social media is to doubt the veracity of their content. Jonathan shows some sort of cynical distance towards those types of discourses, as he says:

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[7] The concept of Chrome extensions has been created by Google and allows its users to shape their browser experience in different ways. URL link:
https://chrome.google.com/webstore/category/extensions?hl=fr

> "If we think again of those people using those tags "Love your work",
> "so passionate about my work", it is more to show the world, rather than
> a true feeling that you have" (Jonathan, Appendix 1, p. viii-ix).

By doubting the authenticity of the posts and comments on social media, Jonathan distances himself from them and is less influenced by the Discourse they carry. Jonathan does not think that what appears on social media is the two best percent of people's life; he thinks that it is a disguise, a way used by people to reinvent parts of their lives and "show the world" what they wish they would be.

Sarah expressed this mistrust in a slightly different way. She is aware and influenced by the content carried in social media, but she sometimes has the feeling that it is too much, that people exaggerate what they write. As she says:

> "I have some friends that have found their dream job. Skiing all the
> time. They always write something like "#Love my job" or "#Do what
> you are passionate about". Something where I am thinking *That's a bit
> too much… take it easy*!" (Sarah, Appendix 1, p. iii).

The fact that Sarah experiences a feeling of aversion towards some posts on social media shows that she's distancing herself from it. She thinks that the authors of such content are *overdoing* it. It is interesting to observe the many ways in which employees at Locado escape the pressure created by the social media: some avoid visiting these type of websites, some do not believe in their content and others consider their content overstated. In all cases, some employees feel the need to protect themselves from the Discourse hold in social media.

The three types of protection mechanisms that are observed at Locado allow us to think that the modern Discourse on passion is a real pressure for certain individuals. By doubting the worth of passion, seeing passion as secondary or avoiding places where people tend to brag about their own passion are all ways of protecting oneself from the modern Discourse on passion. Whether or not those protection mechanisms are reasonable will be discussed in chapter 9.

# 8. Results

The comparison between the long-range Discourse analysis on passion in the pre-modern and modern times, and the close-range discourse analysis made at Locado provides an interesting overview of the different ways in which passion can be understood. The similarities between those discourses define how passion creates certain type of subjects, and what trends are most influential. In this section, the idea of subjectification is exposed, explaining how passion is seen from the point of view of the individual. Thereafter, the most influential trends are explained based on the similarities between the close-range and the long-range Discourses. Finally, the surprises and novelties discovered in the Discourses analysis are exposed as such and the conceptual framework (cf. chapter 6) is used one last time to expose the results in a more visual manner.

## Subjectification

The way in which people talk or write about passion influences the definition of passion and what it means to be passionate. The discourse analysis made in chapter 4, 5, 6 and 7 helps to capture how passion is understood nowadays and what has influenced and still influences that understanding. Parts of the results of this Discourse analysis are to define what passion implies for an individual and what type of subjectification is produced. In this context, six characteristics of a passionate worker can be observed both in the pre-modern or modern Discourse, and in the local discourse, such as: impacting one's work, being empowered, i. e. risk seeking, being engaged, easily entering a state of flow, and being intrinsically motivated and creative.

The analysis shows that the passionate employees need to have an impact on their work (cf. Thure, Sarah, Jonathan, Alex). A passionate worker is creating something new, changing the status quo, and somehow adding value to the company. This characteristic is mostly influenced by a modern Discourse on passion (cf. Chapter 5).

Then it seems clear that a passionate person is empowered, ready to take on risks and tackle new challenges (cf. Thure, Sarah, Jonathan). A passionate person is seen as someone who does not fear failure and who is good at facing adversity; an

idea very present in the modern Discourse on passion (cf. chapter 5). In the same line of thought, passionate people are seen as more engaged, more involved with their work (cf. Alex, Jonathan, Thure). Passion is seen as medium through which a person connects with his or her work. It involves some sort of fusion between the individual and the activity, which can be observed both in the modern Discourse on passion, as motivation and the pre-modern Discourse on passion, as transcendence.

The capacity to easily enter a state of flow has been mentioned by several employees at Locado (cf. Thure, Jonathan) and an important part of the modern Discourse analysis (cf. Chapter 5). This characteristic has roots in the pre-modern conception of passion, as it can involve a feeling of transcendence and an out of body experience (cf. Csikszentmihalyi). This capacity to be completely immerged in an activity and not feeling the bodily needs is characteristic of an activity one does with passion. Contrarily to many other characteristics, the capacity to enter a state of flow is hard to simulate.

Another characteristic of a passionate worker is his or her intrinsic motivation to achieve certain goals (cf. Thure, Jonathan). Passion involves a force coming from within, which does not necessitate any incentive. It is therefore not possible to force someone into being passionate about his or her work. Passion is understood as closely coupled to the person's interest and identity, and disconnected from external expectations (cf. Michael).

Finally, passionate workers are expected to *do* more, to be more creative and rule breaking than other workers (Jonathan). One expects from a passionate person that he or she would think outside the box, or in contradiction with "mainstream" ideas. To be passionate involves interacting with an activity in a completely personalized way. An idea mainly influenced by the modern conception of passion as coupled to one's identity (cf. Chapter 5).

These characteristics represent the type of expectations individuals have nowadays, based on the Discourse analysis made in the previous chapters. We can observe that most characteristics are influenced by the modern Discourse on passion, but some exceptions remain present. As discussed in the first chapter, the extrapolation of ideas from a situational discourse into a general Discourse on passion involves risks of mistake, but it allows for interesting hypothesis.

## Most influential trends

Several trends, i. e. tendencies were noticed in the local discourse, which were mostly in line with the long-range Discourse analysis made in chapter 4 and 5. Five of them can be observed and called as follow: the two levels of understanding, the social aspect of passion, the impact of structures, the role of social media, the new cynicism toward passion as a "buzzword".

First of all, it was noticeable during the interviews, and in the modern Discourse on passion, that two levels of understanding occur: the understanding of passion, as an affect and the understanding of the Discourse on passion, as a social influence. At the beginning of this project, it was not clear that those two levels of understanding were so distinctive. While asking people about passion, some would directly refer to passion itself, explaining their personal experience, and others would talk about the Discourse on passion, and how passion has become part of the work life. The impact of the Discourse on passion has become an important part of this research, as it seems to be closely interconnected to the way people understand and experience passion.

Second of all, the role of the *others* happens to be more important in the situational discourse than what I expected and what I understood from the pre-modern and modern Discourse on passion (cf. Sarah, Jonathan, Alex, Michael, Thure). All interviewees affirm that in order to be passionate about an activity, they have the need to add value to society and help someone else. The result of their work needs to be valued by their co-workers or their users. It seems that passion is not only an identity-related, but also a social affect. The feedback from content users or friends nourishes the passion employees experience for their work; a concept that seems logical, but is rarely talked about in the modern or pre-modern Discourse on passion.

A third trend that can be sensed in the situational discourse is the importance of the work's structure (cf. Sarah, Jonathan, Alex). It seems that passion has the potential to be developed as long as the right conditions are in line. Most employees talk about the importance of being able to take important decisions, having a direct impact on their work, being able to chose some or most of their tasks, and being free to manage their own agenda. In other words, a certain *freedom of action* seems

to be essential for the creation and sustainability of passion at work. These types of structure are often what make small companies such as Locado attractive, but they also seem to be appreciated in bigger organisations. As I will describe in the following chapter, the new interest for "job crafting" implies more flexibility and a new capacity to involve employee's identity in the job creation process.

On another level, the importance of social media is a trend that is sensed both in the modern and the close-range Discourse on passion (cf. Chapter 5, Thure, Sarah). The fact that social media allow people to share their passion so easily tends to be experienced as a pressure, compelling everyone to be more passionate, or brand his or herself more seriously. Some employees admit that the pressure was high and they had to protect themselves from it. It has become so easy to compare oneself to others, be impressed by one's friends' highest achievement, or the ways in which they present their life on social media. The discussion on whether or not one should protect oneself from social media will be further developed in chapter 9.

A last trend is noticeable in the discourse analysis: the cynicism and suspicion towards a highly positive Discourse on passion (Cf. Chapter 5, Michael, Sarah). It seems that the discourse on passion has reached such an intensity that some people do not want to believe in it anymore. It is fair to assume that a part of the population thinks that the idea of passion as a "new skill", or a "must have" is overrated. This might be the consequence of a neo-normative control through the Discourse on passion. It has become clear for some people that companies would like their employees to be more passionate, i. e. more involved in their work in order to enhance their overall results. With that in mind, it is not surprising that a certain cynicism has developed in the last years.

**Surprises and New Trends**

The analysis of the situational discourse added both nuances and radically new concepts to the pre-modern and modern Discourse on passion. Certain parts of the employee's discourse on passion did not seem to appear in the common Discourse on passion. I noticed four of them: the financial instability, the omnipresence of the thoughts, the pride involved and the concept that passion should be doubted.

The idea that passion at work is often coupled with financial instability (cf. Jonathan) seems to be a fair assumption to make; nevertheless, it is rare to hear this

type of discourse in the literature or the discussions nowadays. It is rational to expect a higher risk while pursuing one's passion, but it does not seem to be part of the popular Discourse. The reason why Jonathan evoked this high risk is probably because he was the one taking most of the risks when Locado started. As a co-founder, he did not get any salary during his first year of work, and he had to deal with a high level of uncertainty in order to be able to live out his passion. This discourse might be seen as *out-dated* by other employees at Locado, but it seems that it is part of a common understanding of passion for certain worker, and maybe a more realistic view of the job market.
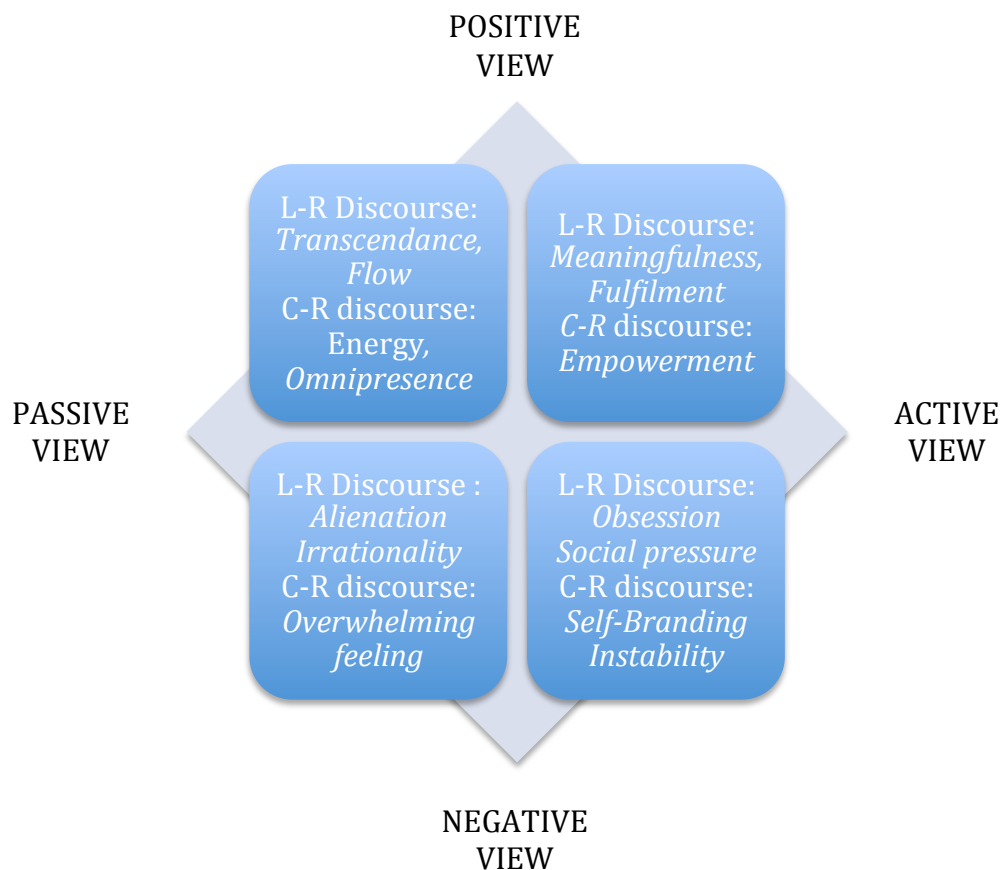
Another novelty is the idea of omnipresence of thoughts (cf. Alex). This nuance to the idea of intensity and wholeness was surprising as it took a new direction; contrarily to the idea of obsessive passion (cf. Chapter 5), Alex does not judge the omnipresence of thoughts as good or bad. He just noticed that he was passionate about his job, and was constantly thinking about it. Even if he would have to think of something else, he would keep his job in mind.

The third surprise is the mention of pride as an element related to passion (cf. Alex). It is not common in the Discourse on passion to talk about pride as a condition, but it is reasonable to assume that because one is proud of one's work, one feels a great feeling of involvement and motivation towards the activity in question. It is therefore interesting to consider pride as a new characteristic of passionate people.

These new views and understanding of passion give us a vision of how the common Discourse might evolve in the future.

## Visual Results

In order to better visualize the results of the this discourse analysis, I will use the matrix created in chapter 6. In this matrix, the two different types of discourses are represented, the "Long-range Discourse" (L-R Discourse) and the "Close-range discourse" (C-R discourse). The discourses that were showing important similitudes are gathered in this matrix in order to visualize the multitude of existing understandings of passion, and their influences from the modern and pre-modern Discourse on passion.

POSITIVE
VIEW

L-R Discourse:
*Transcendance,*
*Flow*
*C-R discourse:*
*Energy,*
*Omnipresence*

L-R Discourse:
*Meaningfulness,*
*Fulfilment*
*C-R discourse:*
*Empowerment*

PASSIVE
VIEW

ACTIVE
VIEW

L-R Discourse :
*Alienation*
*Irrationality*
*C-R discourse:*
*Overwhelming*
*feeling*

L-R Discourse:
*Obsession*
*Social pressure*
*C-R discourse:*
*Self-Branding*
*Instability*

NEGATIVE
VIEW

This matrix is a summary of global views and local discourses on passion. It allows us to understand the main existent Discourses on passion based on literature and interviews. It is interesting to see that opposing views coexist, and that the way people understand passion highly depends on their vision and experience of work. However, certain subjects could not be fully discussed in the realm of this analysis, and will be presented for further research in the coming section.

## 9. Discussion

In this last chapter, five topics will be discussed in order to illustrate the broader implications of the above results. These topics all have one characteristic in common; they are highly influenced by one's view of passion. Among them: the need for work-life balance, the increasing importance of "job crafting", the role of social media and the presence of neo-normative control will be discussed.

**The Need For Work Life Balance**

The concept of work life balance is based on the premise that employees have several identities: an identity at work, at home, within one or more social communities and an identity on their own (Friedman, 2008). It is inspired by the idea that one should find a balance between those four identities in order to have a rich and meaningful life. As we discussed in chapter 5, there is a Discourse nowadays empowering the concept of work-life balance, which can be seen as being in opposition with the modern Discourse on passion. But as discussed in chapter 7, most employees at Locado would agree with the importance of passion at work, and the importance of their social life and life at home. The active/positive view of passion perfectly allows the integration of a work-life balance. As long as passion is seen as a positive choice (modern conception of passion), a balance between work and private life does not create any conflict. But if passion is seen as a passive affect (cf. Michael, Alex), blurred boundaries between work and private life might occur. In these cases, a work-life balance might be impossible to sustain.

In the case of Michael, the need for work-life balance is an argument not to become to close to, i. e. passionate about his job. The fact that his identity at work might be the only identity he has seems to frighten him. Concurrently, Alex argues that passion can be omnipresent without preventing him to have a healthy and meaningful life. It is therefore important to know if a work-life balance is wanted for each different case.

In other words, an active view of passion allows workers to keep certain barriers between their work and private life; as a passive view of passion tends to obligate the individuals to choose between their passion and the idea of a work-life balance (Friedman, 2008).

**The Importance of "Job Crafting"**

A new interest for job crafting seems to have appeared in the last decades, concurrently to the modern Discourse on passion (Grant and Ashford, 2008; Berg et al., 2013; Wrzesniewski, 2014). In Wrzesniewski's research, job crafting is defined as follows:

" [Job crafting is] what employees do to design their own jobs in ways that foster engagement at work, job satisfaction, resilience, and thriving" (2014).

Job crafting is the capacity to design one's job in different manners, in order to be more satisfied and involved with one's work. It implies a high degree of freedom for employees, as it allows them to design their own tasks, relationships, and understanding of their work (Wrzesniewski, 2014). The capacity to adapt their work to their identity enables most employees to engage profoundly with any kind of activity. This capacity is often described as a condition to be truly passionate about one's job in modern discourses (cf. chapter 5 and 7).

In an active/positive view of passion, which is widely spread in the modern Discourse, as we discussed in chapter 5, 6 and 7, the possibility to shape one's work is an important aspect of passion at work. Being passionate about a certain type of work implies the appropriation of that work; it needs to suit the employee's personal interest, and be a source of empowerment. Influenced by messages such as: "find your passion" or "follow your passion", it seems logical that employees expect their work to fit their established inner passions. Work is seen as a mean for employees to express their inner selves, and therefore has to be flexible and malleable.

It seems that a certain "lack of structure" enables employees to create their own way of working and purpose. By choosing which type of tasks they want to execute, or relationships they want to have, employees become their own manager, and experience a greater capacity to express their own desires. It becomes easier for workers to find meaning in their work, if they are capable of creating that meaning themselves, by changing certain aspects of their work (Wrzesniewski, 2014).

One could think that a certain level of job crafting exists at all levels of organisation, which is true. But Wrzesniewski argues that employees with a high degree of freedom and an explicit right to craft their tasks and relationships at work are more satisfied and fulfilled with their activities. It seems to infer more meaning and purpose to their work life; another aspect directly connected to an active/positive view of passion.

## The Role of Social Media

The role of social media has intensely grown in the last decades (cf. Hassler). Since the launch of Facebook, Twitter Instagram and other social platforms, personal information and experiences have been rapidly and globally shared. These new media influence the modern Discourse on passion (cf. Sarah, Thure, Michael), as individuals are now able to put their lives on display, share their interests with the world but also and more fundamentally: compare their lives with the ones of others.

Based on the results of this study, it seems that social media influence greatly the Discourse on passion. The active/negative view of passion shows that many individuals feel pressured to be passionate about their work (cf. Sarah, Thure, and chapter 7). Young employees feel the need to be passionate about their work, because they experience a great emphasis on passion in the social media. The use of *#passion*, or *#passionate* has become common and almost expected from social media users (cf. Hassler). A tendency implying that everyone should be passionate about his or her work, or anxious about a lack of passion.

Furthermore, this study has shown that social media created a new view on passion: the cynical view (cf. Michael, Alex, Jonathan). This negative view of passion sees it as superficial and meaningless. The great emphasis on passion that social media has created led many people to believe that such passion could not exist. The Discourse on passion is seen as overrated, as it is a word people use mainly to get more attention on the social media. Many individuals start to believe that the term passion has lost its meaning in the last decade (cf. chapter 5).

## The Presence of Neo-normative Control

The role of neo-normative control within organisations has become an important discussion over the last decade (cf. Fleming and Sturdy, 2009). There has been a rise in Discourses invoking the self at work, such as "be yourself at work" or "embrace your identity". These types of message are seen as empowering by some individuals, and repressing for others. It appears that a form of authenticity is expected at work: employers expect to see employee's true self and personalities. This pressure to "be oneself" can be related to the pressure people experience towards finding one's passion, as we discussed in the previous chapters.

The neo-normative control is seen as a new managerial strategy. Contrarily to *normative* control, which expected employees to integrate a certain culture, and certain types of values, neo-normative control pushes employee to free themselves from cultural barriers, and express their own identities and differences. The quest for more diversity and originality at work is not problematic in itself, as it seems to empower some individuals to accept their particularities, but there is a danger of creating a new type of pressure: the need to define oneself in a specific way.

A company culture that allows people to keep their personal opinions to themselves and be immersed in a crowd somehow protects personal identities. In a diversity-seeking environment, it is not possible to rely on a common culture and a protection of the worker's identities. Everyone has to find his or her own voice; this pressure towards being *special* creates a new norm, which does not allow individuals to rest and follow the norms.

This pressure is very similar to the pressure experienced by Sarah and Thure. While discussing passion, the people having an active/negative view of the term tend to sense a pressure towards finding their passion, which is uncomfortable to most of them. Concurrently, individuals with an active/positive view of passion tend to see this type of environment as empowering. This depends of their own conception of passion, or their own conception of freedom, as Maravelias would argue (2007: 555). In his theory, the shift from bureaucratic organisations towards post-bureaucratic ones has not increased the level of freedom experienced by employees but reconfigured its nature (Maravelias, 2007: 556). While creating post-bureaucratic organisations and leaving the bureaucratic conceptions behind, freedom has moved from "freedom as autonomy" to "freedom as potential". The new form of freedom involves a greater possibility to develop oneself, i. e. a greater potential, but it also implies a new form of obligation, as Maravelias explains:

> "Post-bureaucratic organizations seek to make commitment to and identification with work and the organization a norm that has to be respected by those who wish to keep their jobs" (Maravelias, 2007: 556).

Identification and commitment with one's work has become a requirement, which can be a stressful aspect for many employees. Similarly, modern Discourses on passion allows individuals to develop themselves without boundaries, it creates a pressure towards a deeper and more personal commitment at the work place.

On the other hand, some employees prefer the boundaries created by bureaucratic organisations, as they allow for a clear distinction between themselves and their work. This type of freedom is called "freedom as autonomy". One of the positive aspects of bureaucracy is that individuals are able to disconnect from work more easily, as they are not expected to be involved as a whole person. They are allowed to be someone else at home. This lack of autonomy in most modern organisations is somehow linked to the idea that employees need to be passionate and committed to their activity.

It seems therefore interesting for managers to discuss these various interpretations of passion and identities with their employees, before imposing a passion-seeking or diversity-seeking environment on them. In the interviews made at Locado, it was clear that most employees were glad to be in a passion-seeking environment, which is common for a start-up. It would be interesting to research other types of environment, in which passion is not so present from the beginning on, and observe if the employee's understanding of passion would be active, passive, positive or negative. Because it seems that if the understanding of passion is negative, a neo-normative environment would create more harm than good.

A clearer idea of the employees' understanding of passion and freedom allows managers to tune their way of building a corporate environment that suits their employee's needs.

# Conclusion

The term passion has greatly changed over the last centuries, creating opposing views on the subject. On the one hand, the pre-modern Discourse defines passion as passive and dangerous affect, as the modern Discourse defines passion as an active and mainly positive affect.

The view of passion inspired by the Ancient Greek described passion as opposed to reason. The development of Philosophy mainly took place to enable individuals to resist their passions and remain mentally sane. In Christianity, being passionate was compared to being unfaithful to God; it was interpreted as a sin. Later, in the Renaissance and up until the breakthrough in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, a more neutral view of passion appeared; it was neither good nor bad to have a passion, and more importantly, passions were seen as part of the human nature. This was the last step before the modern idea of passion appeared, as a way to access the truth, and realise oneself. Passion is from that moment on bound to the individual's identity.

The modern Discourse exposes passion as a precious feeling that needs to be found; by knowing one's passion, one presumably gets to know oneself. Passion is seen as a way to achieve a fulfilled and meaningful life. Another important aspect of passion nowadays seems to be its value on the economic market. Passion is seen as a soft skill, a capacity own by employees to truly engage with their work and be productive. This focus on passion as a skill and a way towards a meaningful career tends to create a need for an always more passionate work life. A pressure towards this type of work-life can be sensed in the media and the close-range analysis made at Locado.

In this situational setting, it can be observed that the ways in which individuals understand passion impact their views of work in general. For example, a great part of the young workers currently embrace the active and positive Discourse on passion. They need the intensity of passion at work in order to feel involved and committed; it gives them a feeling of importance and meaning, which they could not imagine working without. This first case is mainly inspired by the modern Discourse on passion. On the other hand, some workers are cautious to use the term passion to define their work; they would rather talk of certain interests and pleasures. They see passion as a potential danger of losing their autonomy and a

risk of becoming 'workaholics'. This latter is a position inspired by the pre-modern understanding of passion, which implies that this type of Discourse still influences some people's view on the matter nowadays.

A matrix developed in Chapter 6 helps situate the close-range discourses on passion, as a combination of the pre-modern and modern views. It is possible to detect discourses inspired by a pre-modern conception of passion, in the positive and negative way, as well as discourses inspired by the modern conception of passion, in a positive and negative way as well. This variety of understandings allows us to see passion as a complicated affect, which is highly influenced by people's interpretations, and cannot be reduced to one single concept.

Alongside, it is important to notice the important role of social media in the development of the positive Discourse on passion. By sharing the most intense and passionate part of their work life, social media users nourish the modern Discourse, and enable the social pressure to grow towards an active and positive view of passion. Concurrently, companies tend to use this same Discourse on passion as a new way to enhance the workers' personal engagement; the more a worker feels passionate about his work, the more he or she feels personally bound to the activity and committed to its results. It is a form of management that can be compared to the concept of neo-normative control brought up by Fleming and Sturdy (2009).

Therefore, I would argue that the apparition of post-bureaucratic organisation and the growing importance of the "self" in western societies has increased the emphasis on passion and has shaped its meaning over the last decades. Concurrently, its development towards a more active understanding of the term could be due to the growing abstraction of most work activities and the need for a new source of meaning at work (Chalofsky and Krishna, 2009). The idea that one should "find" one's passion, and that it is our role to actively look for it, pushes some employees to be more pro-active in defining what are their work-tasks, depending what constitutes their passions.

Consequently, the main domains connected to this work, which I hope will be further researched are the notions of *self-management* and *job crafting*. The confrontation between the self and work seems to be the essence of post-bureaucratic organisations, while remaining poorly understood. A greater level of

freedom as potential (cf. Maravelias 2007) is imposed on employees in post-bureaucratic organisations, implying a greater pressure towards self-engagement at work and a greater capacity for shaping one's work tasks. A specific view of passion partly determines if individuals qualify their work, as bound to their personality or not; and the roles of self-management and job crafting are the main impacts of an active and positive view of passion, implying a strong connection between the self and one's work. Both self-management and job crafting require a precise understanding of one's interests and capacities, a quality that might grow more and more essential in the near future.

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# Appendix 1: Interviews Transcript

### Thure's interview: Business developer

*What is your task for Locado?*

Growing the company, I'm a business developer

*What relationship do you have to your work?*

It's pretty close. I'm new here so I have been having it on my mind, even in my private life. Even my relations at work feel more personal than what I have experienced so far.

*What are your expectations towards work?*

I build it up in the last three years. I want an ambitious workplace, high stimulation, possibilities to have close relationship with my colleagues, as I mentioned.

*Are you passionate about your work?*

Yeah, I'd say so.

*What does it mean to you?*

I don't have much to compare with, but it's when you try to go out of yourself to achieve common goals.

*Do you have an example?*

Yesterday evening at 11 pm, I felt like I wanted to go back to the office. Sometimes, everything is going well, you are in a flow, you watch talks that inspire you and you want to do more…

*Do you feel the presence of a discourse on passion within the young generation?*

Yes, I really think so. It's hard to tell if it's good or a pressure. Before, it was a pressure because I did not really like what I was doing, so it became a pressure. It feels like you should be passionate. It's hard to find a place where you really are passionate, but I would say I am now. But I'm not sure how long it will last. So I think it's both good and bad.

The social media pushes people to communicate the top 2% of their feelings, so that makes it even harder, when you look at yourself. You feel that others are very passionate about what they are doing. So for me, I try to keep away from everything that is social media, with the help of Chrome extensions, such as "News Feed

Eradicator". Because I feel like I would start comparing. But since I came here, I compare myself less. I guess it's because I like it here.

*There are two different views on passion, a modern and pre-modern conception (...), which one resonates with you the most?*

I think they aren't exclusive. It's subjective, but I would say that the discourse on passion empowers me at the moment.

*What about your parents?*

My mam has a passion for what she does. My dad is not passionate anymore. He likes his subject but not his job.

## Sarah Interview: PR worker

*How would you describe your work?*

Fun, That's the first word. I haven't been here for that long, but I have been laughing every day, which is new to me. Work is not necessary supposed to be fun, but that's what gets you through, I guess. It's very social here, so it helps me get through the day. My tasks come second.

*What relationship do you have with your work?*

I haven't been here that long, but it has changed a lot since I'm here. Because I feel like we can hang out after work here. Before I felt like I had to distance myself from it because my colleagues back then were not like me. We were in different life stages. I felt we could not connect. I felt out of place, like I did not want to merge.

*Would you like to get closer?*

I am very social, I like to be with people, so it was new to me in my old job that I would not involve myself. I did not recognise myself anymore.

*Would you say you are passionate about your job?*

Definitely.

*How do you understand that term?*

It's like being in love with what you do. It's the same as when I initiate social event with my friends. If I get a good idea, I become in love with it. I feel the same feeling of excitement in my stomach. You can't wait to do it. I gives you energy.

*Do you expect it from your work in general?*

Not necessary. Work is something you have to do, because a lot of people think you just have to do it.

*Can you sense some sort of discourse on passion at work?*

Definitely. I feel like I want to work on something that I believe in. We spend so much time on our job. I want to enjoy it. Sometimes I feel that my parents think that we are spoiled. That we expect too much. But I don't think it's true. I think it's okay to expect it from a job.

I have some friends that have found their dream job. Skiing all the time. They always write something like "Love my job" or "#Do what you are passionate about". Something where I am thinking "That's a bit too much, take it easy". But then again, maybe it's just because I'm jealous that they found something that is their hobby and made it into a job. And I'm actually pretty about that often.

*There are two different views on passion, a modern and pre-modern conception (...), which one resonates with you the most?*

I see both of them present, actually. But there's a very strong discourse in our generation about the need to find the job that you love, your "dream job". And my friends and I finished our studies two years ago, and it has been a huge anti-climax. We were like "Okay, now I'm ready for the world", "I'm going to find my dream job and really take over the world with my special talent and my interests" But now we realize that a job is a job and yes, you get tired and you get stressed out. So it has been an anti-climax for many of them, and for me, especially with my last job!

You end your studies with a feeling that now you really have to get practical and do some things that will change the world. But then you work and you lack that freedom you had before, especially in a big organisation, as the one I worked in before. You need to comply with all the structures and all the quality manuals and procedure and you drawn in it. I felt like such a tiny bit of that organisation. I would not make a difference whatsoever. This feeling makes it impossible for me to be passionate about my job. That is also why I like a startup, because the results are not far from what you do. I can see for example if there were fewer signups, we need to do something. When I was sitting in a big organisation, it was like "oh, we sell more headsets" and what I thought was, oh but I'm a product manager, I'm way behind the sales, so I could not relate and feel passionate.

I think there's a huge pressure to find a job that you love. Because you see all those Hashtags "Love my job" "Love what I do". You see that and you feel a great pressure to brand yourself through your job as well. So even though I feel like I want to be passionate, it's not only because someone else wants it. It drives me when I can feel that I'm doing something that is producing results.

When I make events, (that yearly event with 20 people for example, where we do tournaments and stuff). The most important is to see that people are having fun. It's a big part of it.

*What about your parents, do they have the same expectations towards work?*

No, they had different expectations. My mam was a nurse, she regretted not having taken more education. As she was young, she just wanted a job. My dad is very involved in his job, he loves it, but it was not the case in the beginning. He thinks that you need a "good job", which is secure and in a good organisation. Where you can stay 20 years. For him, it's important to be in the "right" company. Deloitte for example.

Recently I quit my job, without having another one, and my parents could not sleep for two weeks.


**Alex Interview: App Developer**

*How would you describe your work at Locado?*

I'm doing all the tech stuff. Programming and developing ideas for the product. It's my responsibility that everything is running.

*Do you have a close relationship to your work?*

Very close! I think about it all the time. I also think about other stuff when I'm off, but it's always on the back of my head.

*What are your expectations towards your work?*

I expect it to be challenging, have fun and create something that has value for other people. Most important is that I get challenged and I get to do some exciting tasks, not just trivial stuff, that somebody else tells me to do.

*Would you say you are passionate about your work?*

Definitely!

*How do you understand that term?*

It means that I love doing it and I feel pride in doing it.

*Would you say there is a specific discourse on passion for young generations, some sort of pressure?*

I don't feel it. I think there is, but I've been lucky that I just loved my job, actually, everywhere I've been working so far.

*Do you expect passion in your work and the people you hire?*

For myself, I would not say I need it, but I love to have it. I would have a less happy life if I would not be passionate about my work. Concerning new hire, it's important in the early stage to heave people that are passionate about it, who believes in the product, the idea, the vision. But at some point it becomes less important as long as they do what they are expected to do. Especially when it comes to developers. We could have developers that are not that passionate as long as they do what we expect from them.

*Could you give me one example of something you felt passionate about?*

We just did a big change to the product, and the way in which people choose where they see items from. And that felt really good to implement and push out to the users, because it was such a big change and I felt that it made the product more understandable. I'm kind of proud of that!

*There are two different views on passion, a modern and pre-modern conception (...), which one resonates with you the most?*

The first resonates more, but both might be true. So somewhere in between? I don't look at other places and think "oh, that could be so much better", but I think I've experienced that earlier. To have a great job, but still look at other places and think "okay that would be the dream to work there". That might make my current job a little less valuable to think that. But it's different in a startup because you have so much impact on your own work.

*What are your parent's expectations?*

I'm not sure I know that. But I guess it is different. They are kind of settled. I think they like their job. But my dad would change job otherwise. He might also think "there's something better out there". My mam has had the same job forever now!

*Will you settle as well?*

I'm afraid of it. But if my personal situation changes, it might be desirable to have a more secure job. But actually, this feels quite secure right now. But I could imagine a situation in which many other stuff become more important, like kids, house, etc. so my job might come in second.

## Michael Interview: Designer

*How would you describe your work?*

I'm a designer so that's what I do, I design interfaces. I also oversee the identity and communication of the company.

*What is your relationship to your work? Is it rather close, distanced..?*

It's in-between. Sometimes I work a lot and get closer to it somehow. But often I like to take time off. I enjoy my time off. I tend to do that. When I'm home I tend not to think to much about work.

*What are your expectations towards work?*

It needs to inspire me and be fun. And I think that coworkers are important for me.

*Would you say you are passionate about your work?*

Yeah, I would say that. It's important to me, that my work is functional and people like using what I do. That's what makes me thrilled about doing stuff. When I see people liking it and using it everyday.

*Do you sense a certain discourse on passion within our generation?*

That's kind of expected. So you have to be humble if you have a job, and be happy about what you are doing. Especially in the startup industry. You need to enjoy that you have so many possibilities.

*Would you say the passion is a needed skill?*

We discussed that when we hire people here. I don't think that it's that necessary. You need to have some level of interest in what you are doing, but I think interest and love is more correct or good to have than passion. There are different levels of passion. You can enjoy and love what you are doing but it does not have to be your whole life.

I have my doubts towards the word passion, towards the idea that people need to be insanely in love with their jobs. to be able to work here for example. You need time to be off in order to be a good worker.

*There are two different views on passion, a modern and pre-modern conception (...), which one resonates with you the most?*

That's a hard question… I think for me it's more a social thing versus a personal thing. I have my everyday life and what I like to do. Sit behind a desk and be creative or whatever. But there's also some pressure from outside, which is demanding some kind of passion. So I think it's a struggle between being myself, the work I do, and what's expected of me.

*The discourse on passion is not empowering you?*

To me it is more related to what I like to do. I don't know if it's coming from inside or if some people imposed it on me.

*What about your parents, do they different expectations?*

Definitely. My parents were much more practical. And it was more a coincidence what they have been doing. My mom destroyed her carrier to clean and take care of kids. And my father used to clean in a company and some guy asked him if he wanted to play with computers and he ended up system engineer - no education, nothing. I see up to them anyway.

## Jonathan's interview: Co-founder, with IT background

*How would you describe your work?*

Hectic, quite chaotic. There's quite a lot of things to do. But fun! You define the things you work with, and you can directly see the output of what you are doing.

*What is your relationship with your work?*

It's hard to leave behind when I go home. I don't see it too much as work. When I play around with numbers or work at home, it's more of an interest to me. It's like someone paints art, or does something else. I think it's cool to build something that has meaning for other people. So I work a lot, but I don't really consider it work.

*Would you say you are passionate about your work?*

Yeah, at Locado, it's not only being passionate about the mission, but building something that people like to use. It's like being small and building legos and then people play with it and you think that was cool. smt like that. It could also be that I work for another startup, and I would do stamps, because I thought it was cool and see people loving stamps, and I would build something for them.

When I'm passionate about something, I spend a lot of energy trying to achieve a certain goal. For example, I used to run a lot and I used to run long distances, so I had to do a lot of training but I did it to test myself, I trained my psyche. When I work at Locado, I also try to surpass myself, breaking some rules, trying to make people see things differently. That's my drive. Change the way people do things.

*Do you sense a discourse on passion, some sort of social pressure?*

Yeah, I think in terms of my network, people don't understand what I'm doing. I come from a small community where life is simple. You work, get a salary, etc. When I started at Locado, I had no salary, so I worked washing stairs every morning before working for Locado. So my network does not understand that I would make a risky choice to be able to work independently on my project.

It's hard to answer this question about passion because it's hard to explain what motivates people, what thrives you to do stuff that they don't understand. You'll meet people that don't understand why you would have so many uncertainty in your life. My network is comfortable with having a fix salary, coming home everyday at 4 pm, relaxing with the family, even if it's a boring job.

I have a background in IT and I remember once, when I was late in my 20's. I took a year to work in a sport store, selling shoes. I just needed to do something else. The confine place you get when you work, for me it's more a killer than working 80 hours on something that I enjoy.

In terms of pressure, it does not mean too much to me what people think of my personal choices.

*There are two different views on passion, a modern and pre-modern conception (...), which one resonates with you the most?*

I think, I don't know whether the one or the other is right. Passion is hard to explain, because it's more a feeling. So, for example, I could not play badminton and be passionate about that, so I guess it is also related to what you define as being a job. For example, my passion is not driven too much towards our mission statement. I'm proud of it, but my passion is creating something. So I guess I could not take a job where I would not feel like I'm creating something of value to others. I couldn't work in places where I would need to pretend that I'm passionate about it. People would see it as fake. If we think again of those people using those tags ("Love your

work", "so passionate about my work"), it is more to show the world, rather than a true feeling that you have. I probably did not an answer your question...

My choices are more influenced by what it means to me rather than what other people think, because, if that was the case, than I would work at Microsoft and I would pretend to have the perfect life. So people would think "Oh, he has a career". That does not really mean so much to me.

*And your parents, did they have the same expectations towards work?*

No, not the same expectations at all. My parents work to get a living. There were driven by the fact that they could have a life outside their job. My father had the same energy as me when he was junger. He had a restaurant and opened a grocery store, eco and stuff. He had the drive to build something that challenges the status quo. But when my sister and I grew up, we required more money, he knew he had to take a plain job. He then stayed at his job for 20 years, so he lived more outside his job than inside.

*You would prefer to live within your job?*

Yeah, maybe at some point, I don't know if I will be able to take the freedom that we have now, it's easier to do that with mid-20s. You don't have children or a mortgage. When I turn 40, and Locado is not anything at that time. And I have 3 children or two and a mortgage; I'll need to take some hard decisions, right. But I always have been quite adventurous, so I'm not afraid of taking risks. But of course, you have to talk more about it when you have *children*. I could see myself in the US doing something else. Not get stuck here.

We took a decision back then, when I started working for Locado. It was either we might not travel, have it more tight, but I would be more happy. I decided that doing what I wanted to. It was the right way about it I think. And it worked quite well! We also got a lot of experience. I could not imagine working at some place where you got bored everyday. I hate it already. Where you need to do a mental reset before you go home. That would be insane.

So if Locado does not become a success, I would maybe not start my own company, but join an established startup. But yeah, going to Danske Bank offers you a lot of security, because they are never gonna go bankrupt, as startups might in 3 months.

But I would prefer that. Have less salary just to be able to work outside the box. It's like with colouring books, I always rather go outside the lines.