

# Radboud University



Master thesis

Where there is light, there is dark -  
Over-commitment as part of a dynamic commitment  
system

Student:	I.N.O. (Iman) te Wildt
Student number:	1045054
Supervisor:	Dr. Y.G.T. (Yvonne) van Rossenberg
Second examiner:	Dr. K. Pak
University:	Radboud University
Master:	Business Administration
Specialization:	Strategic Human Resource Leadership
Date:	14-06-2021

## Acknowledgements

Throughout the writing of this Master Thesis, I have received a great deal of support and assistance.

Foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Yvonne van Rossenberg for her continuous guidance, enthusiastic encouragement and enormous knowledge on commitment literature. Your support during this process was invaluable for me and your passionate input helped me to get the best out of myself and brought my thesis to a higher level. I also would like to thank Dr. Karen Pak as the second examiner of this thesis for her valuable feedback on my research proposal.

During the writing phase of the research proposal, I had the chance to join an international research Community of Practice on workplace commitment. I would like to express my appreciation for this opportunity. By this I could develop myself as an academic and learned a great deal on research and commitment. In particular, I would like to thank Stephanie de Koning and Bjorn Kruijschoop, whom I got to know during this Community of Practice. I sincerely enjoyed our collaboration and thereby I have never felt alone during my thesis. Your effort, ideas and feedback helped me in processing my own thoughts into concrete ideas for my thesis.

Finally, I must express my deep gratitude to my partner, friends and family, who provided me with support and happily distracted me from my thesis. You were always there for me when I needed a sympathetic ear.

Thank you all, I could not have done it without you.

Iman te Wildt

## Abstract

Even though the commitment literature has recognized pressures for the individual in relation to multiple commitments, at this point there are no empirical studies towards over-commitment and its associated relations. ERI literature seeks to shed light on this construct, however the existing definitions, descriptions and measures used do not reflect a commitment bond. While a commitment reflects a volitional psychological bond of dedication to and responsibility for a particular target (Klein et al., 2012), over-commitment is mainly presented as “a set of attitudes, behaviours and emotions reflecting excessive striving in combination with a strong desire of being approved and esteemed” (Siegrist, 2001, p. 55). This study draws on Commitment System Theory’s three parameters (strength, number & coupling of elements) to reconnect the construct over-commitment from the ERI literature and embed this in the commitment literature. Hereby the aim of this study is to explore the dynamics of commitment systems in relation to how and when over-commitment can be part of such a system. While using an abductive approach, the explorative interview study using critical incidents technique and drawings as participatory visual methods are conducted at a Dutch knowledge intensive organization. The results of this study revealed two trajectories whereby over-commitment is represented as a behavioural outcome of system structure. The study contributed by the addition of a System Dynamics lens, which helped in explaining the role of feedback loops, commitment norms on awareness and the temporariness of over-commitment.

Keywords: Over-commitment, CST, , Multiple targets, ERI, System Dynamics

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Literature review .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.1 Systematic literature review</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1.1 Commitment literature	12
2.1.2 Effort-Reward Imbalance literature	13
<b>2.2 Developing the conceptualization of over-commitment</b>	<b>17</b>
2.2.1 Strength of the commitment bond	17
2.2.2 Number and coupling of commitment bonds	18
2.2.3 Volitional nature of the commitment bond/ Duration of the commitment bond	18
<b>3. Research methodology .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>3.1 Research design &amp; methods</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>3.2 The organization</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>3.3 Participants</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>3.4 Procedure</b>	<b>23</b>
3.4.1 Data collection	23
3.4.2 Data analysis	24
<b>3.5 Research ethics</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>4. Findings.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4.1 Trajectory 1: Commitment bond becomes too strong</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1.1 Commitment system dynamics layer	28
4.1.2 Associated relations layer	30
4.1.3 Context related commitment norms	32
<b>4.2 Trajectory 2: Too many simultaneously held targets</b>	<b>35</b>
4.2.1 Commitment system dynamics layer	35
4.2.2 Associated relations layer	37
4.2.3 Context related commitment norms	39
<b>5. Discussion.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>5.1 System Dynamics</b>	<b>41</b>

5.1.1 An introduction	41
5.1.2 Limits to growth, renewable stock constrained by a renewable stock	42
<b>5.2 Over-commitment as part of a dynamic commitment system</b>	<b>43</b>
5.2.1 Role of feedback loops in commitment systems	43
5.2.2 Role of commitment norms & awareness	46
This finding provides insights for individuals, organization and HR in how commitment norms impose one's commitment system. Being aware of these commitment norms creates understanding of your own behaviour and the behaviour of others. For example: we can see how individuals feel pressured by different commitment norms imposed by their relatives (partner and friends who do not understand why you feel such a strong commitment towards your work). Additionally, we see how over-commitment can be seen much more in a commitment system where individuals impose themselves with stricter norms. These insights contribute to the awareness that these individuals can seek to adapt such a commitment norm, before we reach the critical threshold.	48
<b>6. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>57</b>
Appendix 1: Systematic literature review	57
Appendix 2: ERI Questionnaire – 6 items over-commitment (Siegrist, 2004)	58
Appendix 3: Interview guide	59
English	59
Dutch	66
Appendix 4: Final coding hierarchy	72
Appendix 5: Commitment system trajectories	73

# 1. Introduction

Commitment, a volitional psychological bond reflecting dedication to and responsibility for a particular target (Klein, Molley, & Brinsfield, 2012, p.137), has been considered a source of positive human resource management (HRM) outcomes (Klein, Brinsfield, & Cooper, 2020). Klein et al. (2002) recognizes a positive relation between commitment and outcomes such as “turnover, motivation, absenteeism, prosocial behaviours, organizational performance and well-being (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Mathieu, & Zajac, 1990; Meyer, 2016; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolyntsky, 2002)” (p.1). Despite the dominantly positive view, potential negative outcomes only are occasionally recognized in the organizational commitment and goal commitment literature (e.g. Gouldner, 1960; Klein et al., 1999; Mowday et al., 1989), whereby the ‘dark side’ outside of escalation of commitment is largely neglected in academic literature outside (Klein et al., 2012).

Already early on in the development of the commitment literature scholars have recognized commitment to be inherently related to conflicts or situations in which commitments can be dysfunctional (Reichers, 1985). For example, although much of goal commitment literature has assumed that high commitment is desirable (Klein et al., 1999, p. 893), there are situations where (excessively) high commitments can be detrimental to an individual's well-being because of stress, anxiety or other health risks. In addition, holding too many commitments at the time can result in the experience that commitments work against each other and therefore be the reason for conflict (Johnson, Groff, & Taing, 2009; Reichers, 1985).

On the basis of the volitional nature of a commitment bond (Klein et al., 2012), it may be expected that when commitment becomes “too much” the individual simply chooses to let go, to freely choose to reduce commitment or to change commitment to another target. On the other hand, commitment implies an urge to perform behaviors that exceeds instrumental motivation for the individual and “Taken to the extreme, it can inspire individuals to go to great length and even sacrifice their own personal well-being for a greater good that they identify with (Adler & Adler, 1988; Salancik, 1977; Shamir, 1991)” (Solinger, Olfen, & Roe, 2008, p. 80).

Even though the commitment literature has recognised the pressures for the individual in relation to multiple commitments, at this point there are no empirical studies regarding this

subject. The concept of over-commitment and its associated relations, therefore, remain a neglected topic which the current study seeks to address.

There is a line of research that seeks to shed light on over-commitment within the Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) literature. This research line can be seen as somewhat separate and disconnected from the commitment field. Here, over-commitment is used as a person-specific component defined as “a set of attitudes, behaviors, and emotions reflecting excessive striving in combination with a strong desire of being approved and esteemed” (Siegrist, 2001, p. 55). The construct is used to explain strategic choices of workers and characteristics of individual coping with the demands and rewards at work (Siegrist, 2002). There are two limitations with regards to the conceptualisation of over-commitment in the ERI literature. Firstly, the definition and description of over-commitment within the ERI literature is disconnected from the commitment construct and the commitment literature. Secondly, the definition and description of over-commitment in the ERI literature shows conceptual overlap and ambiguity. The concept is described as a composite of related constructs including job demands, effort, reward, commitment, attitudes, behaviours and emotions.

In order to shed light on over-commitment this study seeks to draw on the expertise from the academic field of commitment as well as the ERI conceptualisation of over-commitment. In order to integrate insight from both fields, this study will draw on Commitment System Theory (CST) by Klein, Solinger, & Dufolt (2020). More specifically, this theoretical framework will function to reconnect the construct “over-commitment” from the ERI literature and embed this in the commitment literature. By doing so the theoretical framework will address conceptual clarity as well as furthering insight into the concept of over-commitment.

As the latest advancement in the commitment literature, CST offers an alternative perspective to explain how commitments interrelate and behave as part of larger systems (Klein et al., 2020). CST articulates multiple commitments as “*systems, defined as a network of inter-relating commitments to a set of targets*” (Klein et al, 2020, p. 4-5). Although this work was developed with a primary focus on workplace commitments, it has been suggested the theory is applicable to all commitments in all life domains (Klein et al., 2020).

Drawn from General System Theory (GST), the commitment system consists of three essential system parameters which can be applied to any system; (1) Number of Elements, (2) Strength of Elements, and (3) Coupling of Elements. The following section will elaborate on these three parameters.

### **1. Number of Elements**

The number of elements presents the number of commitment targets that a system contains. The number of elements is dynamic and can vary across systems. A change in the number of elements also impacts other parameters, hence many are based on the number of elements.

### **2. Strength of Elements**

The strength of elements represents how committed an individual is to each target in their system. System elements tend to, but do not need to differ in strength. A person-centred research strategy can be used to differentiate in commitment strengths, which will be done during this study.

### **3. Coupling of Elements**

This parameter reflects the dynamic interrelationship between any two system elements. The interrelationship between two commitments in a system can be strong (tightly coupled), weak (loosely coupled) or nonexistent (decoupled). Depending on the person and situation, any two commitments can be synergistic (positively coupled), neutral (decoupled) or conflicting (negatively coupled).

This study uses these three parameters to explore when an over-commitment is experienced in (part of) the commitment system of an individual. The aim of this research is to “*Explore the dynamics of commitment systems in relation to how and when over-commitment can be part of such a system*”. This is how this study seeks to contribute to the conceptual clarity of the construct, as well as to reconnect and embed this concept in Commitment System Theory. Hence, the central question of this research is as follows:

*“How can the construct of over-commitment be developed on the basis of Commitment System Theory? “*

This thesis contributes both on scientific as well as societal levels. Over-commitment is currently not studied in the commitment literature. By reconnecting and embedding this construct in CST, future research can develop, contribute and study over-commitment, building



on a coherent system of commitment. This study enables the possibility for commitment and ERI researchers to study commitment in a more coherent sense, by integrating the insights from both fields.

In addition to its scientific relevance, exploring the dynamics of commitment systems in relation to how and when over-commitment can be part of such a system, is of practical relevance for employees, organizations and society. Currently, society is facing an increase in work related stress, mental health issues and burnouts (Volksgezondheid, 2019). In 2018, more than 17% of employees in the Netherlands perceived burnout related symptoms several times a month. Additionally, 35,5% of Dutch employees mentioned work stress as the most important cause for absenteeism. Above that, the Covid-19 pandemic comes into place. According to Van Leeuwen (2021) 36% of employees who switched to homeworking due to the pandemic experienced more stress.

ERI literature provide us with indications how over-committed individuals have higher risks of poor physical & mental health (Herr, Loerbroks, Angerer, Siegrist & Fischer, 2017), such as sensibility to job stress (Li, Zhang, Li, & Lu, 2020) symptoms of vital exhaustion (Kegye, Czeglédi, Zana, Csikai, & Hegedus, 2020), emotional exhaustion (Schadenhofer et al., 2018) and depressive symptoms (Li, Herr, Allen, Stephens, & Alpass, 2017). However, the conceptualization of over-commitment in ERI literature has limitations, the indications show how over-commitment is related to experiencing negative well-being outcomes. The ongoing increase in work-related stress reassembles the need for a study that seeks to shed light upon this construct at this moment in time.

To resume the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is most likely that organizations experience difficulties in maintaining a commitment bond with their homeworking employees due to the lack of visibility. Numerous organizations provide tips and tricks on how to make sure that employees stay committed to the company (e.g. Randstad, n.d.; Hulshof & Kaptein, 2020). Considering the dominantly positive view of commitment literature, it can be assumed that organizations aim at enhancing commitment bonds of their employees to their maximum potential. Without a clear sight on the potential negative outcomes of commitment, this seems irresponsible in relation to the well-being of employees, making this study highly relevant.

The remaining part of this study proceeds as follows: the second chapter presents a review of the literature where conceptual clarity is addressed as well as further insights in the concept of over-commitment. The third chapter is concerned with the research methodology,

consisting of data collection through an interview study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this empirical study. The fifth chapter presents the contributions that this study has made to theory and practice, discussing limitations and suggestions for further research. In the last chapter an answer to the research question is presented.

## 2. Literature review

This chapter aims at addressing conceptual clarity as well as furthering insights into the concept over-commitment. In order to do so a systematic literature review has been done, which provides an overview on the existing literature regarding the construct. Firstly, the results of the systematic search are presented. Secondly, a conceptualization of over-commitment is developed whereby the construct is reconnected from ERI literature and embedded in the commitment literature, drawing on CST as a theoretical framework.

### 2.1 Systematic literature review

The current section will provide an overview of the existing literature on over-commitment by presenting the results of the conducted systematic literature review. The detailed results of this review are presented in Appendix 1. The search term “over-commit\*” had been used on ‘Web of Science’ to get our results. After exclusion of irrelevant fields (e.g. data/computing science, natural science & biology) and studies that did not measure over-commitment (e.g. committee’s) a total of 49 studies were found. Out of these, 48 studies used the ERI-model (1996) as theoretical background and/or measure for over-commitment. Two papers referred to the commitment literature by mentioning the Three-Component Model of Meyer & Allen (1991), while measuring over-commitment using the ERI Questionnaire of Siegrist et al. (2004). In other studies, the ERI-model was used together with theoretical frameworks like Job-Demands & Resources Model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), Job Demands Control Support Model (Karasek & Theorell, 1990) & Role conflict theory (Gross, Mason, & McEachern, 1958). Only one paper found did not include ERI in their study on over-commitment, referring to self-justification theory instead.

This section will first provide an overview on what we currently know on over-commitment from commitment literature, followed by an overview of what we know from ERI literature in relation to this topic.

### 2.1.1 Commitment literature

The three-component model (TCM) by Meyer and Allen (1991) has been the most prominent view of commitment in the past 20 years (Van Rossenberg et al., 2018). They have presented commitment as “*a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets*” (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 301), where a distinction is made between different mindsets of commitment, namely; Affective commitment (emotional attachment to the organization), Continuance commitment (the awareness of the costs of leaving the organization) and Normative commitment (feeling of obligation to continue employment) (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Nonetheless, in the last decade, the TCM perspective has been criticized for a number of reasons, one of them being based on organizational commitment, and thereby leaving other targets out of its framework (Van Rossenberg et al., 2018). Work is increasingly taking place beyond the boundaries of the organization, making room for commitments outside of these boundaries (Van Rossenberg et al., 2018). Additionally, it has been recognized that individuals do have multiple commitments outside their work, such as family, friends or a community (Klein et al., 2020). TCM does not facilitate focussing on dynamic and target-free perspectives (Van Rossenberg et al., 2018), whereby the view does not fit the aim of this research.

The reconceptualization of commitment by Klein et al. (2012) however does facilitate in this respect. Commitment is here defined as “*a volitional psychological bond reflecting dedication to and responsibility to a particular target*” (Klein et al., 2012, p. 137) and also used in the development of CST. The definition is distinct from the TCM by seeing commitment as a psychological bond instead of a binding force, eliminating the need for ancillary mindsets and excluding a course of action where commitments are confounded with an outcome (Klein et al., 2012). The definition can be applied across the boundaries of the organization while recognizing multiple internal and external targets, which facilitates the aim of this study.

As described in the introduction, commitment literature scholars have recognized the pressures individual’s experiencing in relation to their multiple commitments. Examples relate to (excessively) high commitment (Klein et al., 1999), holding on too many targets at the same time (Johnson et al., 2009; Reichers, 1985) and situations where a commitment bond is held on for too long where individuals could sacrifice their own well-being in order to maintain this bond (Solinger et al., 2008). Yet, the academic literature shows some ambiguity in how many

commitment bonds an individual can form. On the one hand Klein et al. (2012) state that the capacity of an individual to form commitments does not appear to be limited, while there are limits to their time, emotion and attention. “As long as commitments to different targets have compatible demands, multiple commitments need not conflict (Angle & Perry, 1986; Randall, 1988).”(Klein et al., 2012, p. 143). On the other hand, Reichers (1985) perspective on multiple commitments shows that individuals may suffer from conflicts over the direction that their energies and loyalties should take, which are engendered by too many commitments. This indicates that there is indeed a maximum capacity for how many commitment bonds an individual can form.

From the current state of the field, we can conclude that commitment literature researchers have recognized the difficulties individuals experience in their multiple commitments. Yet, there still seems to be ambiguity in when and if individuals can form *too much* or *too many* commitments, which could represent the concept of over-commitment. The systematic search did not find any study regarding this subject that fit the multiple target approach of current day commitment literature. Additionally, no definitions, descriptions or empirical studies were found and, therefore, over-commitment remains a neglected topic within the academic field of commitment.

### *2.1.2 Effort-Reward Imbalance literature*

48 of the 49 studies found on over-commitment used the ERI-model by Siegrist (1996) as theoretical background and/or measure of over-commitment (Appendix 1). When developed, the model was provided as an addition to the person-environment fit model (French, Caplan, & Harrison, 1982) and the demand-control model (Karasek, & Theorell, 1990), in order to assess adverse health effects of stressful experiences at work. While over-commitment had not been introduced yet, Siegrist (1996) mentions an intrinsic source with motivations of the individual worker in a demanding situation. In this respect, the concept ‘need for control’ is introduced as a personal pattern of coping with the demands at work. Following this work, this coping pattern is referred to as ‘over-commitment’ (Siegrist, 2001). Over-commitment here is defined as “*a set of attitudes, behaviours and emotions reflecting excessive striving in combination with a strong desire to be approved and esteemed*” (Siegrist, 2001, p. 55). Furthermore, over-commitment defines a person-specific component of the model, whereby people who are

characterized by over-commitment are exaggerating their efforts beyond levels usually considered appropriate (Siegrist, 2001).

The systematic literature review shows eleven studies wherein four definitions of over-commitment are given (Table 1). There can be made a distinction between the first three definitions and the last one. The first three definitions all reflect some sort of excessive attitudes, behaviours and emotions, with the first definition being the exact one Siegrist (2001) provided in his work. The last definition refers to self-justification theory, differentiating itself from ERI literature.

<i>Study</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Bjarntoft, Hallman, Mathiassen, Larsson, & Jahncke (2020) Edgar, Geare, & Zhang (2017) Fischer et al. (2019) Kunz (2019) Rasmussen et al (2016) Rodriguez-Cifuentes, Fernandez-Saliner, Moriano, & Topa (2020) Romeo, Yepes-Baldo, Pineiro, Westerberg, & Nordin (2019) Shinan-Altman, Cohen, Rasmussen, Turnell, & Butow (2018) Wang, Li, Li, Yu, & Dai (2017)	A set of attitudes, behaviours and emotions reflecting excessive striving in combination with a strong desire to be approved and esteemed
Mbidi, & Damons (2020)	A set of attitudes, behaviours and emotions that reflect a person's excessive striving for approval and appreciation
Shinan-Altman, Cohen, Rasmussen, Turnell, & Butow (2018)	A set of attitudes, behaviors, and emotions that reflect excessive work effort
Kalyanaram (2018)	Non rational escalation of commitment

Table 1: Overview literature on definitions of over-commitment

However, as Table 2 illustrates, the majority of studies found rather provide a description of over-commitment instead of a definition. These given descriptions varied across studies but could be narrowed down into eleven characteristics (Table 2).

<i>Study</i>	<i>Description</i>
Chen et al. (2016) Darboe, Lin, & Kuo (2016) de Araujo, Siegrist, Moreno, da Fonseca, Barreto, Chor, & Griep (2019) Eddy, Wertheim, Kingsley, & Wright (2017) Hwang, Hong, & Kang (2018) Li et al. (2016) Li, Zhang, Li, & Lu (2020) Rodriguez-Cifuentes, Fernandez-Saliner, Moriano, & Topa (2020) Runeson-Broberg et al. (2017) Siegrist (2016) Siegrist (2017) Teixeira, Marqueze, & Moreno (2020) Wege, Li, Muth, Angerer, & Siegrist (2017) Wege, Li, & Siegrist, J (2018)	Intrinsic/personal coping style
de Oliveira, Griep, Portela, & Rotenberg (2017) Herr et al. (2017) Hwang, Hong, & Kang (2018) Koch, Schablon, Latza, & Nienhaus (2014) Khalid, Pan, Li, Wang, & Ghaffari (2020) Siegrist (2017) Sobol, & Ben-Shlomo (2019)	Excessive work related commitment
Chen et al. (2016) Eddy, Heckenberg, Wertheim, Kent, & Wright (2016) Eddy, Wertheim, Kingsley, & Wright (2017) Kegye, Czegledi, Zana, Csikai, & Hegedus (2020) Riedel et al. (2017)	Inability to withdraw from work
Herr et al. (2017) Hwang, Hong, & Kang (2018) Lee, Cho, Huy, Lee (2020) Siegrist (2017)	High need of approval
Hwang, Hong, & Kang (2018) Schadenhofer et al. (2018) Wege, Li, & Siegrist (2018)	High work demands
Chen et al. (2016) Rodriguez-Cifuentes, Fernandez-Saliner, Moriano, & Topa (2020) Siegrist (2016)	Individuals with a desire of being in control
Hwang, Hong, & Kang (2018) Mendez, Pathan, & Garcia (2015) Rodriguez-Cifuentes, Fernandez-Saliner, Moriano, & Topa (2020)	Excessive engagement
Chen et al. (2016) Siegrist, J (2017)	Excessive striving
Kegye, Czegledi, Zana, Csikai, & Hegedus (2020)	Perceived overburdening workloads
Siegrist (2017)	High job involvement
Magnavita, & Fileni (2014)	Intrinsic stress

Table 2: Overview literature on descriptions of over-commitment

This Table shows how over-commitment is broadly speaking conceptualized as an intrinsic coping style reflecting excessive work-related commitment, resulting in inability to withdraw from work due to high demands. Nevertheless, the variety of descriptions show ambiguity in the concept of over-commitment, highlighting the need for conceptual clarity.

Within ERI literature, most found studies measured over-commitment by using the short version of the over-commitment scale within the ERI Questionnaire, including 6 items and a 4-point Likert scale (Siegrist, 2004), which is presented in Appendix 2. The original psychometric scale for over-commitment contained 29 items reflecting ‘need for control’ (Siegrist, 1996), where the short version focussed on the core notion of spending excessive effort at work by measuring the respondent's inability to withdraw from work (Siegrist, 2004). By doing this, over-commitment within the ERI literature disconnects from the commitment construct and commitment literature. More specifically, where a commitment bond is “a volitional psychological bond reflecting dedication to and responsibility for a particular target” (Klein et al., 2012, p.137), over-commitment in ERI literature is reflected as spending effort at work and the inability to withdraw from that work.

In summary, the construct over-commitment was born 20 years ago and has been repeatedly studied since within the ERI literature. However, the conceptualization of the construct shows limitations. The conceptualization of over-commitment within the ERI literature is disconnected from the commitment construct and commitment literature (see Figure 1). In development of over-commitment within the ERI literature, no references have been made to the commitment literature. Reflecting upon the definitions, descriptions and questionnaire, I state that over-commitment within the ERI literature does not reflect a commitment bond. Moreover, the definitions and descriptions show conceptual overlap and ambiguity, resulting in conceptual unclarity. The construct is described as a composite of related constructs including job demands, effort, reward, commitment, attitudes, behaviours and emotions. The following section will function to reconnect the construct over-commitment from the ERI literature and embed this in the commitment literature. By doing so, conceptual clarity will be addressed.



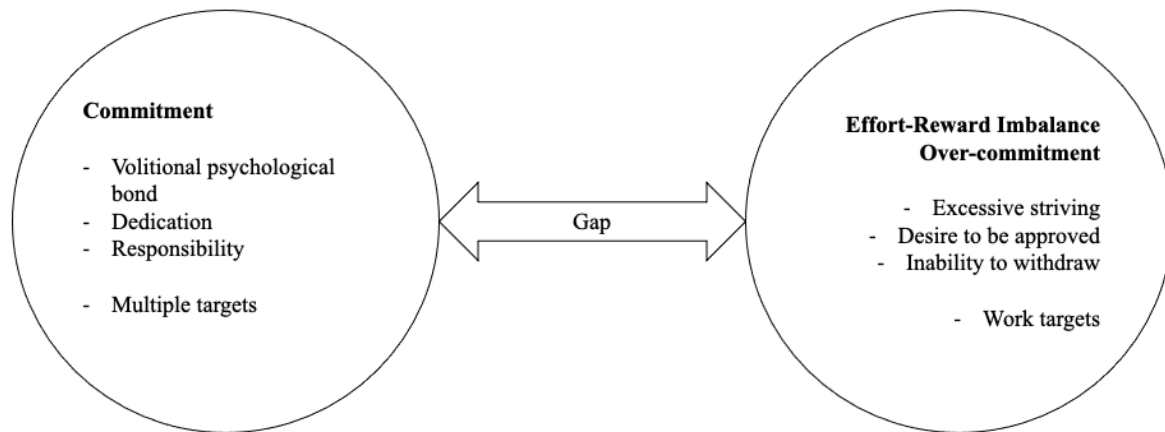


Figure 1: Visual representation of disconnect between the commitment and ERI literature

## 2.2 Developing the conceptualization of over-commitment

The previous section presented an overview on existing literature on over-commitment, whereby the disconnection and conceptual unclarity of the construct has been addressed. The current section seeks to reconnect the two fields and provide a conceptualization of over-commitment. By the development of three sub-questions and a more precise research question, this study uses the three parameters of a commitment system (strength, number and coupling of elements) to explore when over-commitment is experienced in (part of) such a commitment system.

### 2.2.1 *Strength of the commitment bond*

The strength of elements represents how committed an individual is to each target in their system (Klein et al., 2020). This strength towards a particular target can become so strong that a commitment bond becomes excessive. Excessive commitments reflect a volitional psychological bond where an individual feels extreme responsibility and dedication towards a particular target, which can result in negative well-being outcomes (Solinger et al., 2008; Reichers, 1985; Klein et al., 1999). Based on this line of reasoning, the following sub-question is formulated:

*Q1: How does over-commitment (as part of) dynamic commitment systems reflect excessive commitment towards a particular target?*

### *2.2.2 Number and coupling of commitment bonds*

The number of targets in a commitment system varies across individuals (Klein et al., 2020). Individuals can struggle in their multiple commitments when modulating between commitments is not sufficient for attaining desired outcomes to both commitments (Klein et al., 2020). They suffer from conflicts over the direction that their energies and loyalties should take, which are engendered by too many commitments (Reichers, 1985). The maximum capacity for how many commitments an individual can form can be related to the limited resources they can spend in terms of time, emotion and attention (Klein et al., 2012). As a result, they have to choose between their targets, whereby individuals struggle to meet the felt dedication implied by those multiple commitments (Van Rossenberg et al., 2018). This suggests that in an over-commitment system, more targets are held than an individual can cope with. On one hand, this could be related to an absolute number of targets that are simultaneously held. On the other hand, the coupling of the commitment bonds can play a crucial role. For example, situations can occur where there are too many conflicts in the system for an individual to cope with. In this way, different individuals could experience over-commitment in the same way as part of their system, while the absolute number of targets varies across these systems of individuals. Based on this line of reasoning, the following sub-question is formulated:

*Q2: How does over-commitment (as part of) dynamic commitment systems commitment towards too many simultaneously held targets for an individual to cope with?*

### *2.2.3 Volitional nature of the commitment bond/ Duration of the commitment bond*

Klein et al. (2012) state that “a bond is not commitment unless one chooses to accept responsibility for and dedication oneself to the target” (p. 137). It may be expected that when commitment becomes “too much” or “too many” the individual simply chooses to let go, reduce their commitment or to change their commitment to another commitment. On the other hand, commitment implies an urge to perform behaviours that exceeds instrumental motivation for

the individual (Solinger et al., 2008) In this choice, individuals can sacrifice their own well-being as a result of the responsibility and dedication that they feel towards a particular target. In other words, even when these negative personal outcomes occur, individuals could still choose to be committed. Under such circumstances it could be said that in a system that represents over-commitment, individuals hold on to their commitments for too long. The duration of the bond is assumed to be too long when individuals experience negative outcomes as a result of their commitment and still freely choose to maintain this bond. Based on this line of reasoning, the following sub-question is formulated:

*Q3: How does over-commitment (as part of) dynamic commitment systems reflect holding on to a particular target for too long?*

Figure 2 presents a visual representation of how with the sub-questions CST functions to reconnect the construct over-commitment from the ERI literature and embed this in the commitment literature.

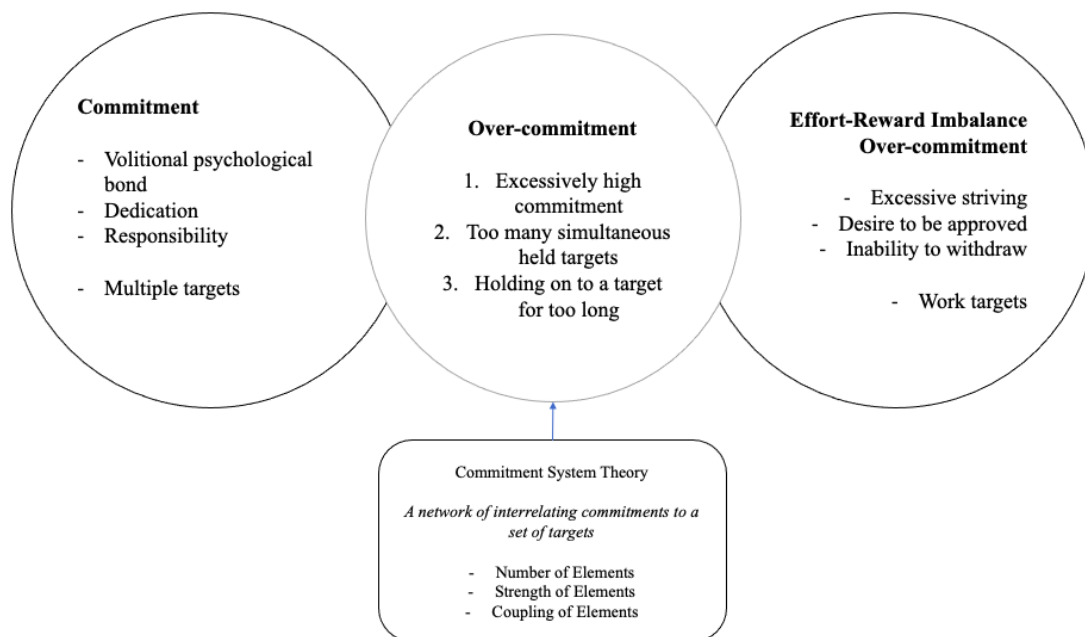


Figure 2: Visual representation of the suggested conceptualization of over-commitment

Finalizing the literature review of this study, I conclude that over-commitment can be defined as *a non-rational escalation of a network of interrelating commitments to a set of targets*. This non-rational escalation occurs when individuals experience negative outcomes as a result of their commitment which can be experienced in (part of) their system. The definition provides the opportunity to empirically explore the dynamics of commitment systems in relation to how and when over-commitment can be part of such a system.

Defining over-commitment contributed to the question how over-commitment can be developed on the basis of CST. Thereby a more specific research question will be answered in the empirical section of this study, namely:

*How does over-commitment develop as (part of) a dynamic commitment system?*

### 3. Research methodology

This chapter presents the methodology of this research. In the first part, the constructivist epistemological approach underlying the research is outlined. The second part of this chapter shows descriptive information on the organization and the participants. Thirdly, the process of the conducted research is described, including data collection and analysing. Finally, the research ethics considered are elaborated upon.

#### 3.1 Research design & methods

In this research, an exploratory study grounded in a (light) constructivist epistemology and abductive approach that allows for iterations and comparison between theory and empiric material was conducted (Cross & Swarts, 2020; Martela, 2015; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Specifically, in order to integrate insights from the academic field of commitment as well as ERI literature, the three system parameters of CST are used to explore the dynamics of commitment systems in relation to how and when over-commitment is experienced as (part of) such a system. The exploratory design helps in providing a well-grounded picture of the situation being developed and the generation of new ideas and assumptions and development of tentative hypotheses (Cuthill, 2002).

A light constructivist approach assumes there may be many different realities whereby multiple perspectives need to be gathered (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The study is set out to increase general understanding of what is happening in the situation by gathering rich data from which ideas are induced. This research specifically is interested in how a person-specific commitment system (Klein et al., 2020) is experienced. In these terms, this study is interested in how and when over-commitment is perceived in the commitment system of individuals, including its dynamic component. This individual level of analysis fits the suggested person-centred approach for studying multiple commitment targets and additionally it “ may allow for unique insights by addressing questions such as: how many commitments can one have, i.e., can all commitments in a “high” profile (Meyer & Morin, 2016; Morin, 2016) be high” (Van Rossenberg et al., 2018, p. 159).

In order to explore over-commitment inside the systems of individuals, an interview study is conducted using the critical incidents technique (CIT) by Flanagan (1959), providing this study with qualitative data. CIT is a procedure for gathering certain observations

concerning human behaviour in defined situations (Flanagan, 1959). The critical incident of this study reflects a commitment system which is perceived as not in balance. This imbalanced system is then compared with a second situation, which reflects a commitment system that is perceived as in balance. In doing so, this study will provide retrospective insights on the dynamic experiences of one's commitments.

Supporting CIT, this study used participatory visual methods (Vince & Warren, 2012), whereby participants were asked to draw their commitment system in two situations (balanced and imbalanced). The drawings promoted dialogue and exploration (Vince & Warren, 2012) while following a co-created semi-structured interview guide (section 3.4.1). Participatory visual methods can reveal those aspects of change and experiences that rarely come to the surface, while being invariably present (Vince & Warren, 2012), which makes them fruitful for the purposes of this study.

### 3.2 The organization

Due to confidentiality agreements with the organization and the participants, the descriptive information that can be disclosed is limited. The project organization emerged in 2013 from its parent production company and developed into an independent business unit with around 500 people in the Netherlands. Diverse multidisciplinary projects, which require working inside, within and across the boundaries of the line organization, lie within the responsibility of employees within the department of Engineering. Their work is characterized as knowledge intensive. The organization/department of Engineering struggles with high workloads and increases in sick leave percentages. The Works Council of the organization has recently presented this problem in an official letter to the management team. This context provided a fruitful area to explore when over-commitment is experienced in (part of) the commitment system of an individual.

This study has been conducted within a research team, where one of the researchers worked at this organization at that moment in time. This gave the opportunity to ask permission to conduct this interview study. The participants were therefore recruited on the basis of convenience sampling (Saunders, 2012). There were no rigid restrictions for sampling, as the aim was to understand the experiences of individuals and not to generalize results (Sharma,

2017). While convenience sampling has the risk of lacking credibility (Saunders, 2012), the context of this group is highly relevant for this study in order to explore when over-commitment is experienced.

### 3.3 Participants

For the purpose of this research project, 47 employees received an email asking if they were willing to participate in a research project on organizational commitment. In total, 3 employees were not willing to participate in this research and 14 could not participate due to other (work related) priorities. In total, 30 interviews were conducted. Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties, one of the recordings was lost. As a replacement, the recording of the latest pilot interview has been added. The interview was found similar enough for comparison with the final sample. The final sample consisted therefore of 30 interviews, with 7 women and 23 men, of which 16 have an engineering position, 8 a project management position and 6 a staff position.

### 3.4 Procedure

#### *3.4.1 Data collection*

The explorative interview study using CIT & drawings as participatory visual methods are supported by a co-created semi-structured interview guide, which is presented in Appendix 3. All interviews followed this interview guide. Before the start of the interview, participants were asked to hand in a pre-assignment. The pre-assignment consists of four steps which helps the participant to draw two separate versions of their commitment system (balanced & imbalanced). The assignment was added in the invitation to participate, and all invited employees could address their questions at any time.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted online via Skype or Microsoft Teams (due to the current Covid-19 pandemic). All interviews were conducted by one of four researchers, depending on availability in terms of time of the participants and the researchers. After asking for permission and assuring confidentiality, all interviews were video recorded for data analysis purposes. The researchers were in close contact and discussed the interview

processes together. The duration of the interviews was between 35 and 75 minutes. All interviews were conducted Dutch, since this was the common language, all participants felt most comfortable in. Therefore, the interview protocol is translated using Round-Trip Translation (RTT), where the protocol was translated into Dutch and then translated back into English (Somers, 2005)(Appendix 3).

The interview guide covered the following topics: exploration of the drawings, work-life balance, over-commitment, misbehaviour and the role of the supervisor in relation to these topics. These topics formed the combined interest of dark-side commitment outcomes of the researchers. By closely following this guide, congruence between the four researchers is maximized. Nevertheless, the primary goal of the interview is to be flexible and let the questions support the experiences of the participants in relation to their (im)balanced commitment system. The questions regarding over-commitment have been derived from earlier sub-questions (section 2.2) and address excessive commitment, commitment towards too many simultaneously held targets and holding on to a target for too long.

### *3.4.2 Data analysis*

The video recordings of the interviews included in the final sample were transcribed ad verbatim by the initial research team. The software program Atlas.ti was used to facilitate the qualitative coding process of the 30 transcripts.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to search across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning and experience which are socially produced and reproduced which seeks to theorise the socio-cultural context and structural conditions of individuals. The abductive analysis involved constant moving between the data set, the coded extracts and the produced analysis of the data and the theoretical framework CST.

The analysis started with open coding with a substantial focus on the three sub-questions from section 2.2. While reading each interview, codes were created with labels which expressed the content of what was said in the quotation. This first round of coding resulted in 487 open codes which represented signs of an over-commitment system.

For the second round of coding, all open codes were reread and grouped. A distinction has been made in (1) Commitment strength, (2) Number & Coupling of targets, (3) Volitional nature / Duration commitment bond, (4) Context, and (5) Possible outcomes.



In the third and final stage of the coding was a more iterative process. Patterns and themes emerged from the data. After several iterations, it was found that the exploration of dynamic commitment systems can best be presented as a trajectory. Presenting a commitment system as a trajectory helps to explain ‘what happens’ (Solinger, van Olffen, Roe & Hofmans, 2013), contributing to explore how and when over-commitment can be part of such a system. Two trajectories are suggested: (1) Commitment bond becomes too strong and (2) Too many simultaneously held targets. These trajectories will be discussed in reference to three conceptual layers: (1) Commitment system dynamics, (2) Associated relations and, (3) Context related commitment norms. Appendix 4 provides the final coding hierarchy of this thematic analysis. Due to confidentiality concerns, the full codebook will not be available.

### 3.5 Research ethics

Prior to the execution of the described methods, ten key principles in research ethics by Bell & Brymann (2007) in Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) have been considered. The principles help to make considerations regarding the protection of interests of the research participants and the integrity of the research community.

Firstly, researchers should protect the interests of the research participants (Bell & Brymann., 2007). There needs to be ensured that the participants come no harm, are fully informed and the research data is confidential. Additionally, dignity should be respected and privacy and anonymity should be protected. These principles were considered by several actions. The participants were informed about the research project including the pre-assignment and its purpose via the invitation email. The participants freely chose if they would like to participate in this research project and could withdraw at any given time. We have recorded the interviews after permission of the participant. In this we guaranteed their anonymity and confidentiality of the data. The recordings have been used for analytical purposes and will be deleted after finalizing the research project. All names in the transcripts are deleted and the transcripts will only be shared on request of examiners of this study and the participants (their own transcript). Additionally, anything written from this data will not be shared with the organization, as well as the participants. Instead, the results were presented in a masterclass on May 31st in the name of the Radboud Management Academy (RMA). Anyone who was interested in the outcomes could participate.

Secondly, researchers should protect the integrity of the research community (Bell & Brymann., 2007). The communication about the research project should be honest and transparent, with avoidance of any misleading or false reporting of research findings. Deceptions should be avoided, and declarations should be made of affiliations and conflicts of interests. When handing in this thesis, a research integrity form has been added which accounts for ethical responsibilities of the researcher. Additionally, section 3.4.2 shows transparency regarding the coding process, whereby the final coding hierarchy is presented in Appendix 4. Due to confidentiality agreements, the full codebook will not be available. The codes were compared with other researchers' findings on the data and refined after discussing, which minimized misinterpretation of the data.

## 4. Findings

Most of the participants could recall a moment in their life where they felt that their commitment system was imbalanced, which they represented in one of their two drawings. In reference to the three sub-questions from section 2.2 (strength, the number & coupling and the volitional nature / duration of the commitment bond), this chapter aims to explore when over-commitment is experienced in (part of) a commitment system in this imbalanced situation. In presenting the findings, two trajectories are suggested: (1) Commitment bond becomes too strong and (2) Too many simultaneously held targets. These trajectories will be discussed in reference to three conceptual layers: (1) Commitment system dynamics, (2) Associated relations and, (3) Context related commitment norms (Figure 3). The structure of this chapter will follow the two trajectories, wherein the three conceptual layers are being discussed.

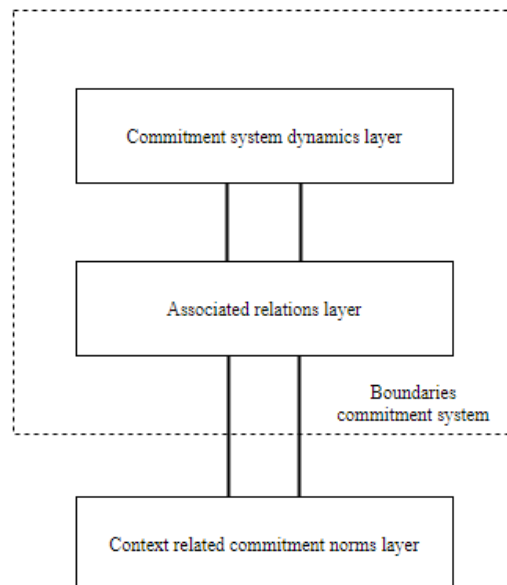


Figure 3: Visualization conceptual layers in findings

### 4.1 Trajectory 1: Commitment bond becomes too strong

Participants could recall a situation where they have difficulties in distributing commitment strength towards their targets. In these cases, the commitment bond(s) to this/these particular(ly) target(s) becomes too strong and the strength to other targets is found restricted.

*“By prioritizing nothing else except that [chuckles]. So uhm well completely, only being busy with that. Well then I for example removed contact with friends for a longer period of time. So then you will sacrifice things for it. Or with the family, then you do not go to a birthday party or something like that. That you do not go there. Or, at the cost of otherones in the study, so that you, well maybe work and uhm, then you have to deliver something and then people do not take their responsibility for example. Well then I have the tendency to keep going, because I then saw my own [...] come in prejudice.” (Interview 8).*

The following sections will elaborate on the findings within this trajectory, exploring how and when over-commitment is experienced (as part) of a commitment system.

#### 4.1.1 Commitment system dynamics layer

The first conceptual layer will discuss the dynamics of the commitment system, when participants experienced a commitment bond that became too strong. When this happens, the commitment system has the possibility to behave in three different ways, based on awareness and how fast this awareness comes to mind. The three behavioural paths that emerged from the data are: (1) Fast awareness and change, (2) Slower awareness and change and, (3) Awareness and forced change. Figure 4 provides a visual representation of the first layer in this trajectory.

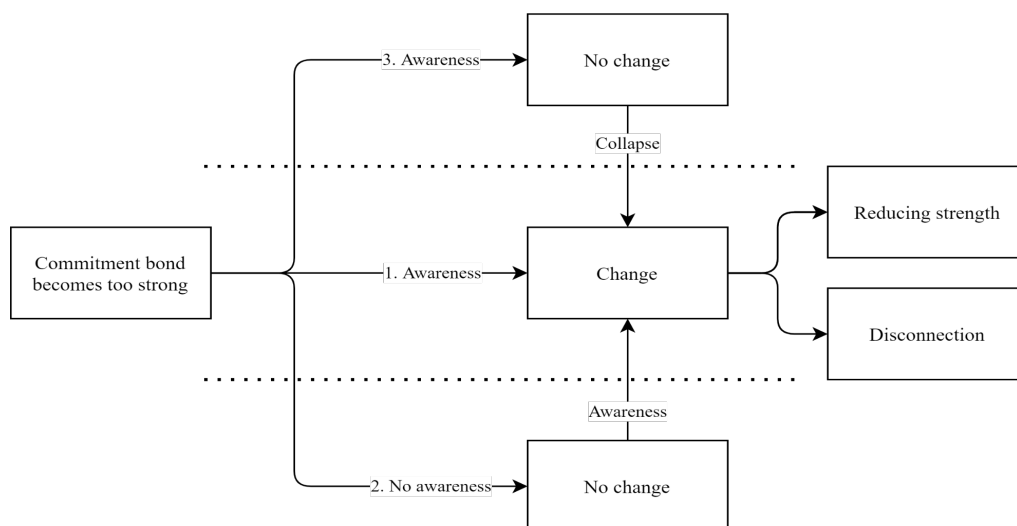


Figure 4: Commitment bond becomes too strong - 1st layer

### **1. Fast awareness and change**

Some participants seemed to notice when one of their commitment bonds becomes “too much”. They become aware of the overtaking strengths of one of their bonds and seek to make a change in their system. There are two types of changes that participants make in order to restore their imbalanced commitment system. On the one hand, they can decrease the commitment strength of a target (most likely the bond that became too strong) *“Uhm after a while you know that it is a little bit too much. But yeah. And then after a while then yes, it is yes it is just taking a step back in there.”* (Interview 14). On the other hand, they can completely disconnect from a commitment bond *“In there I have made the choice by uhm hand in the door of sport, but also made a decision of okay I find my work very important, but another order is important.”* (Interview 2). When participants have made such a change in their commitment system, the feeling of imbalance will decrease and balance will restore *“But after the moment that I had quitted was very fast, yes again a nice feeling, that you are in the right balance again and have made the right decision.”* (Interview 17).

### **2. Slower awareness and change**

More often, participants described that they were not aware that their commitment bond became too strong and that *“for me at that moment it did not feel like that.”* (Interview 5). In these situations, participants did not make any change to reduce the strength of their commitment bond, because they were not aware that this bond had become too strong. We saw that eventually, this awareness came to the mind of the participants and acted as a trigger for change *“But I only became aware of it when I almost fell over the edge haha”*. (Interview 19). The commitment system experienced change in the same way as in the first path, by reducing strength and/or disconnection.

### **3. Awareness and forced change**

Other participants described a situation where they were conscious that a commitment bond had become too strong. However, in these situations they did not undertake any action to change their commitment system. The situation takes on for a while, till a moment when the system collapses *“Yes, for a big part that lies with me I know that. If I look how we tackled work they kept telling like do what you can, but also think about yourself. Only my dedication is so strong*

*that I did not gave myself this space. Yes after a while, you have to.*” (Interview 29). By means of this collapse, the participant is “forced” to reduce strength and/or disconnect from their commitments, to restore the dispersion of commitment strength.

#### 4.1.2 Associated relations layer

The second conceptual layer will discuss the associated relations that were found when participants experienced a commitment bond that became too strong. This section will refer to the commitment system dynamics layer and elaborate on certain antecedents and key roles that emerged from the interviews. Specifically, this section will elaborate on the role of limited resources individuals have to form commitments and how this relates to the experiences of negative well-being outcomes. Figure 5 provides a visual representation of the second layer of this trajectory.

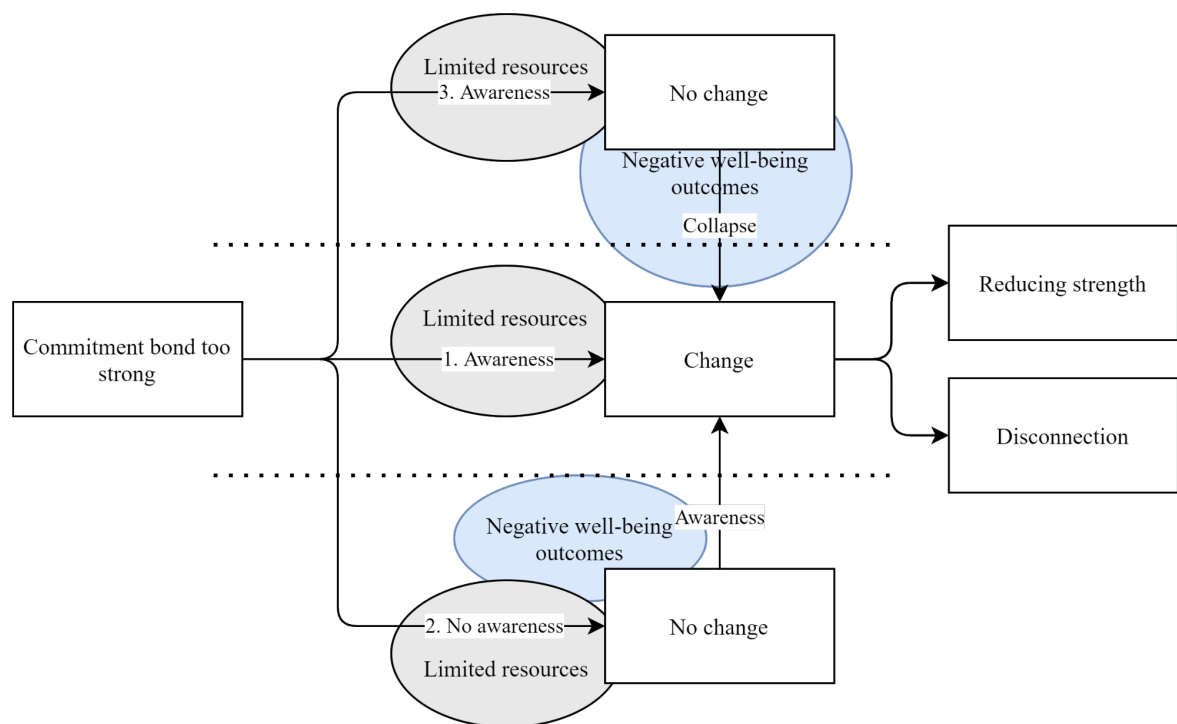


Figure 5: Commitment bond becomes too strong - 2nd layer

Commitment bonds can become too strong, because individuals only can spend a limited amount of time, attention and energy towards those commitments (Van Rossenberg et al., 2018). In these situations, too many of the available resources of the participants are spent on one (or a subset) of target(s), which thereby cannot be spent on other targets.

Based on the conducted interviews, there seems to be a critical threshold in these resources, which thereby can overshoot. This principle relates to rapidity of awareness that the participants experience in a commitment system whereby a commitment bond has become too strong.

In the first behavioural path, participants quickly become aware that their time, attention and energy has reached a maximum, due to their excessive commitment bond. This fast awareness provides them with the possibility to quickly act on the situation. Thereby, participants did not seem to experience some sort of negative well-being outcomes or even state that they have never experienced a commitment that had become too strong.

In the second behavioural path, participants are not immediately aware of their excessive commitment bond and thereby, their resources will overshoot *“Well I was not aware of that. That uhm I uhm ... I was working on a Friday afternoon. It was already an hour or six or so. And suddenly I sat at my computer and looked at what does this even mean. What am I doing? What is this? I did not understand anything of it. And uhm then I turned my computer off. And it lasted a year before I turned that computer on again. So that was for me and yes since that time I am very conscious of of what I have to do. Because I do not want to experience this another time.”* (Interview 20). The interviews gave good indications for several negative well-being outcomes that could occur as a result of this overshoot. For example, participants experience *“lack of energy”* (Interview 12), *“struggle to divide their time and energy towards their targets”* (Interview 1) & experience *stress and tiredness by a target that stays inside their heads”*(Interview 26). The negative well-being outcomes seem to function as a trigger to raise awareness by the participants for a commitment bond that becomes too strong. This awareness however is somewhat delayed in reference to the first described behaviour. In this sense negative well-being outcomes seem necessary, by creating urgency, to change the commitment system of participants.

In the third behavioural path, we see that participants are well aware that they overshoot their own resources. Here, they acknowledged that they consciously went beyond their own limits and fully experienced the negative well-being outcomes that occurred as a result from

that. However, they still maintain their strong commitment towards that particular bond. For example, one of the participants would take on a dangerous job in order to keep his commitment to make a living for his family: *“Let I put it this way, if I would have to take a dangerous job he, where accidents could happen, uh than I would still be fine in doing this, if I could arrange the costs with this.”* (Interview 15). The commitment system thereby stays the same. Eventually, the overshoot will go beyond a critical threshold, creating a collapse. The interviews gave strong indications that the negative well-being outcomes described will become worse *“Not at all getting acknowledgement or appreciation for what you do, but just pure for your own achievement and your own feeling of responsibility. That just resulted that I got overstrained.”* (Interview 7). When such a system collapse occurs, the system will be forced into change. Commitment strength naturally decreases and targets *“disappear for a while”* (Interview 20). The participants felt regret when this situation went on for too long and acknowledged that *“they had to disconnect earlier from their commitment, because it was not healthy anymore.”* (Interview 4).

#### *4.1.3 Context related commitment norms*

The third conceptual layer will discuss the role of context related commitment norms that participants experience, when a commitment bond becomes too strong. As Figure 3 shows, this conceptual layer is placed outside the boundaries of the commitment system but is related to the other two layers. This study found how participants seem to be imposed by certain commitment norms that they hold. Then they test their commitment system in relation to this norm and whether or not the two fit each other. To give an example, participants have certain norms on how much time, attention and energy they can spend on a commitment before they see it as too much. This section will elaborate on how participants are imposed by such commitment norms on three different levels (macro, system & individual level). Figure 6 provides a visual representation of the third layer of this trajectory.



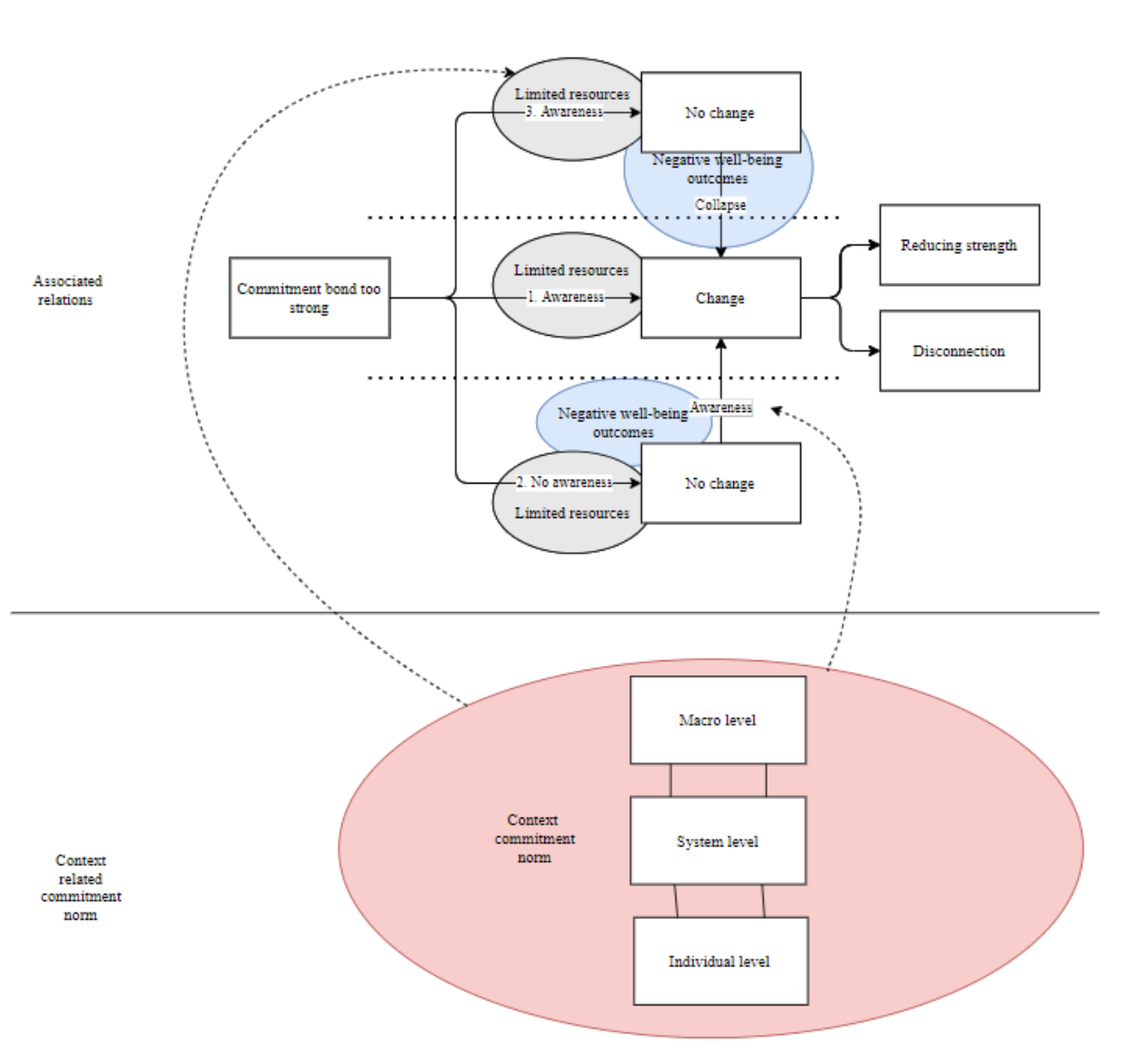


Figure 6: Commitment bond becomes too strong - 2nd layer

Firstly, from a macro perspective, Wasti et al. (2016) acknowledges how cultural characteristics of the context are related to the commitment norms individuals hold. In the development of this study, cultural differences in forming commitments were not taken into account. However, participant 25 who had a non-Dutch ethnical background, described a situation where he did not understand the commitment norms of some of his colleagues: *“I also see people who, yes uhm, I work 40 hours a week, but I also have colleagues who work 60 hours a week and then I think yes, and they think it's completely fine. And then I think yes, and I often argue with them. I think like why? And yes on the one hand they say then I earn more salary and then I say like, but*

*what then is important in your life?"* (Interview 25). This quote illustrates how cultural differences can relate to commitment norms that one can hold.

Secondly, from a system perspective we see that a commitment norm can be imposed by people inside one's commitment system. Hereby, participants referred to relatives who either have the same *"And then we were on a holiday with friends that also have their own company. My husband has his own company, so nobody would look weird! Because we all feel maybe a little bit over-committed sometimes haha."* (Interview 28) or a different commitment norm than that they had *"Now I do have more work-life balance, I sense. Just that so to say first it was work, work, work. During that consultancy work, then you are on the road all the time. You leave at 6 o'clock in the morning and you are home at 8 o'clock in the evening. Well that is also, let me put it this way, that is why the relationship ended, so yes, then you have that piece already, work is then totally not in balance."* (Interview 11).

Thirdly, from an individual perspective, participants impose a commitment role upon themselves. Herein they create their own norms on what they find normal in relation to their commitments and how strong they can be. In creating these individual norms, they can refer to the macro and system level norms that are applicable in their context. Additionally they can even put stricter norms for themselves. Multiple participants described how they *"sacrificed themselves"* for their excessive commitment bonds. There seems to be a set of attitudes, behaviours and emotions that participants described that made them create a stricter norm. For example; they *"want to do well"* (Interview 18), feel a certain *"urge"* (Interview 15), *"drive"* (Interview 10) and or *"ambition"* (Interview 7) towards their target. And perceive that they are *"indispensable"* (Interview 6).



Relating the context related commitment norms to the commitment system, we see that these norms play a key role in the awareness of a commitment bond that becomes too strong. In situations of fast awareness and change (1), this third conceptual layer is not consciously experienced. Participants just adapt their system to the situation; without much awareness of the norms they hold. The awareness of this third conceptual layer however seems to play a key role in behavioural path 2 and 3 (Slower awareness and change & Awareness & forced change). In these paths, participants become aware that they are (close to) violating one of these norms and thereby they can choose to change their system. This conceptual layer thereby enters the commitment system, which Figure 6 visualizes.

## 4.2 Trajectory 2: Too many simultaneously held targets

This section will describe the second trajectory, which reflects the dynamics of a commitment system when participants hold too many targets at the same time. In these cases, they seem to struggle with “*keeping all the balls in the air*” (Interview 9). For example, the following quote is presented: “*Too much actually. Well uhm, maybe that my current situation is much. That is towards my work, that is towards my study that I am finishing. Well a pregnant wife at home, whereby I have a bunch to take over, because she cannot do everything anymore. Well so maybe that I am really, I have quite a lot to keep high, yes.*” (Interview 8).

The following sections will elaborate on the findings within this trajectory, exploring how and when over-commitment is experienced (as part) in a commitment system.

### 4.2.1 Commitment system dynamics layer

The first conceptual layer will discuss the dynamics of the commitment system, when participants experienced too many simultaneously held targets. When this happens, the commitment system has the possibility to behave in three different ways, again based on awareness and how fast this awareness comes to mind. The three behavioural paths that have emerged from the data are: (1) Fast awareness and change, (2) Slower awareness and change and, (3) Awareness and forced change. Figure 7 provides a visual representation of the first layer of this trajectory.

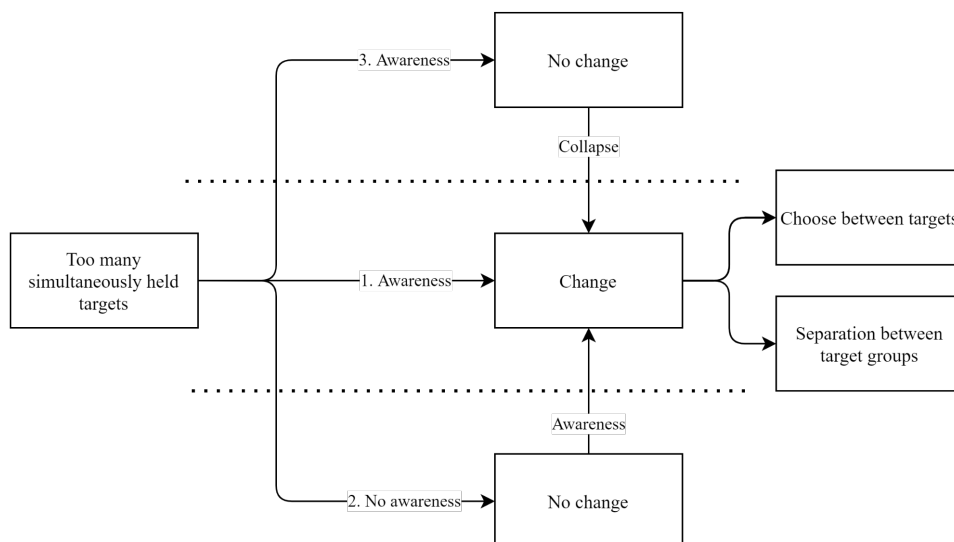


Figure 7: Too many simultaneously held targets - 1st layer

### **1. Fast awareness and change**

Some participants seemed to notice when their commitment system consisted of too many simultaneously held targets. They become aware that the multiple targets that they hold are too much to cope with and seek to make a change in their system. There are two types of changes that participants make in order to restore their imbalanced commitment system. On the one hand, they choose between their multiple targets. One way they do this is by redividing the strength of the bond. Thereby, some commitments can be held *“on the back burner”* (Interview 18). Another way is to disconnect completely from one of their targets *“Uhm ... I I uh I take care that the situation like it is now, yes so I do not sport at all anymore. But uhm yes uhm I I it is calmer. It is nicer. Yes the situation at home, that is priority number one and that has to be on place one. Yes, that is where you come back to everyday.”* (Interview 14). On the other hand, participants seem to separate their targets from each other. We especially see that participants make separations between their *“work & life”* commitments. When participants have made such a change in their commitment system, the feeling of imbalance will decrease and balance will restore.

### **2. Slower awareness and change**

Similar to the first trajectory, not all participants were immediately aware that they were holding too many commitment targets at the same time. In these situations, participants did not make any change, because they were not aware that they were holding too many commitments. We saw that eventually, this awareness came to the mind of the participants and acted as a trigger for change *“Uhm, I think that I will feel it myself like yes now I have quite a lot of things, outside of the things that I already find very important, like family, my household and friends things like that. That I notice that on a certain point, and that I then think like this isn't gonna work out.”* (Interview 28). The commitment system changed in the same way as in the first behavioural path, namely by choosing between or separation of targets.

### **3. No awareness and forced change**

Again, related to the first trajectory, other participants described a situation where they were consciously having too many commitment targets at the same time. In these cases, they knew that they had more commitments than they could handle. However, in these situations, they did

not undertake any action to change their commitment system. The situation takes on for a while, till a moment when the system collapses. By means of this collapse, the participant is “forced” to choose between or separation of targets, to restore the dispersion of commitment strength.

#### 4.2.2 Associated relations layer

The second conceptual layer will discuss the associated relations that were found when participants experienced too many simultaneously held targets. This section will refer to the commitment system dynamics layer and elaborate on certain antecedents and key roles that emerged from the interviews. Specifically, this section will, just as in the first trajectory, elaborate on the role of limited resources individuals have to form commitments and how this relates to the experiences of negative well-being outcomes. Figure 8 provides a visual representation of the second layer of this trajectory.

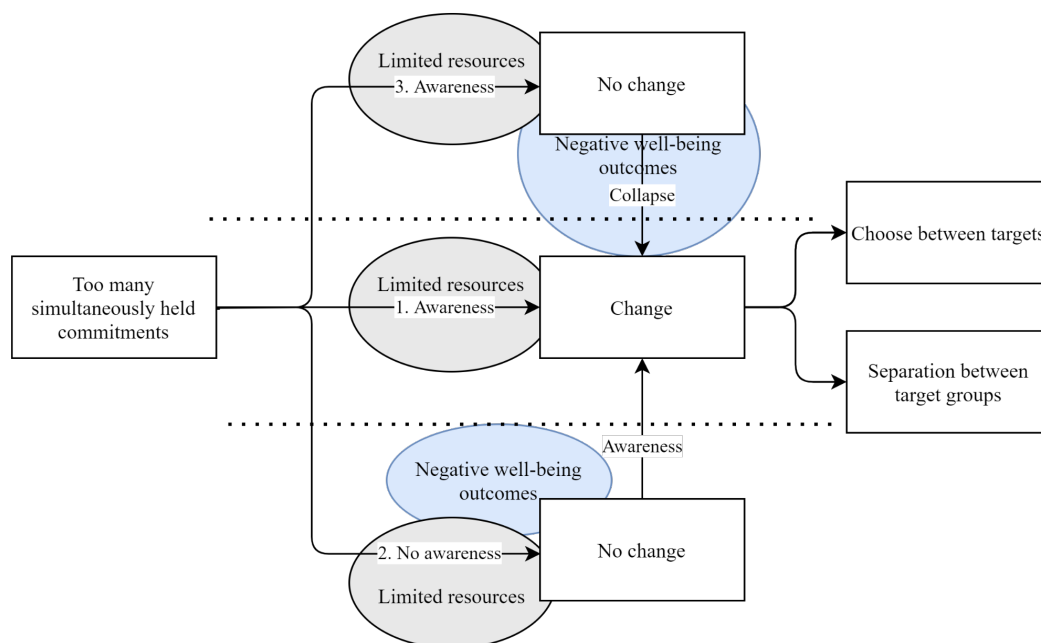


Figure 8: Too many simultaneously held targets - 2nd layer

Participants can experience too many simultaneously held commitment targets, because they are able to exhaust their time, attention and energy (Van Rossenberg et al., 2018). In these situations, participants struggle to divide those resources amongst their targets.

Similar as in the first trajectory, there seems to be a critical threshold in these resources, which thereby can overshoot. This principle relates to the rapidity of awareness in a commitment system whereby too many targets are held simultaneously.

In the first behavioural path, participants quickly become aware that their time, attention and energy has reached a maximum, due their (too many) multiple targets. This fast awareness provides them with the possibility to quickly act on the situation. Thereby, participants did not seem to experience some sort of negative well-being outcomes.

In the second behavioural path, participants are not immediately aware that they hold too many targets at the same time and thereby, their resources will overshoot *“But also just, last week I experienced that for example. I really had a S week, I was way too packed. And at that moment, then sit, then I can almost cry let's say, because I am so busy, so exhausted because I have to get out of bed four times a night.”* (Interview 7). The indications for negative well-being outcomes do also apply within the context of this second trajectory. Participants feel like they *“cannot be fully mentally present”* (Interview 8) and *“cannot spend the desired time and attention”* (Interview 26) to all of their targets *“Yes, that is just impossible. If you do not have a nice situation at work that that happens quite some times, so that was actually tough enough let alone that it also is, yes your first job that is pretty though anyhow. Also travelled pretty much, I had to arrange a moving and in the meantime I was caregiver. So yes wherefore do you have time left? For nothing.”* (Interview 30). The negative well-being outcomes seem to function as a trigger to raise awareness by the participants that they have too many commitments in their system. This awareness however is somewhat delayed in reference to the first described behaviour. In this sense negative well-being outcomes seem necessary, by creating urgency, to change the commitment system of participants.

In the third behavioural path, we see that participants are well aware that they overshoot their own resources. Here, they acknowledged that they consciously went beyond their own limits and fully experienced the negative well-being outcomes that occurred as a result from that. However, they still maintain all of their multiple commitment bonds. The commitment system of these participants thereby stays the same. Eventually, the overshoot will go beyond a critical threshold, creating a collapse. The interviews gave strong indications that the negative well-being outcomes described will become worse *“I am really tired and now I cannot do anything fun and uhm this is going nowhere. And uhm then so if there comes an end to your holiday and you feel something like, I feel terrible, then you just know that it will not get better*

*if you start working again. So this was a reality check like wow this will not be alright if I keep going like this.*” (Interview 30). When such a system collapse occurs, the system will be forced into change. Participants will have to choose between their commitments or separate target groups from each other, even though they experience difficulties in “*ending a commitment*” (Interview 15).

#### 4.2.3 Context related commitment norms

The third conceptual layer will discuss the role of context related commitment norms that participants experience, when too many targets are held simultaneously (Figure 9). The finding of how participants are imposed by certain commitment roles does also apply in this second trajectory. Differentiating from the first trajectory, this section will elaborate on another example that illustrates the dynamics of a commitment system when too many targets are held simultaneously. As described earlier, participants restore their commitment system in this trajectory by separation of their work and life targets. For some participants the separation of work and life seems to be a necessary condition to experience a balanced commitment system “*Yes yes I do have a yes, for me that is clear. It is not that I do not have interests in my work or so, or that it is very much uhm if I do it then I do it 100%. But for me uhm it is 8 hours 100% [work] and then it is 100% the other side [private life]*”. (Interview 20). In this example, all three earlier discussed layers (macro, system and individual level) play a role. From a macro perspective, individuals can refer to the commitment norm of their culture (e.g. is it normal in my culture to work on your weekends). From a system perspective, individuals refer to their relatives (e.g. does my partner find it normal that I work on my weekends). And from an individual perspective, participants form their own commitment norm (e.g. do I find it normal to work on my weekends).

Again, we see how these commitment norms play a key role in the awareness of path 2 and 3 (which are elaborated upon in section 4.2.1). In this means, participants only become aware of these commitment norms, when they (come close to) violating those norms. When this awareness arises, participants either make a change in their system (path 2) or hold a more strict norm at the individual level (path 3).

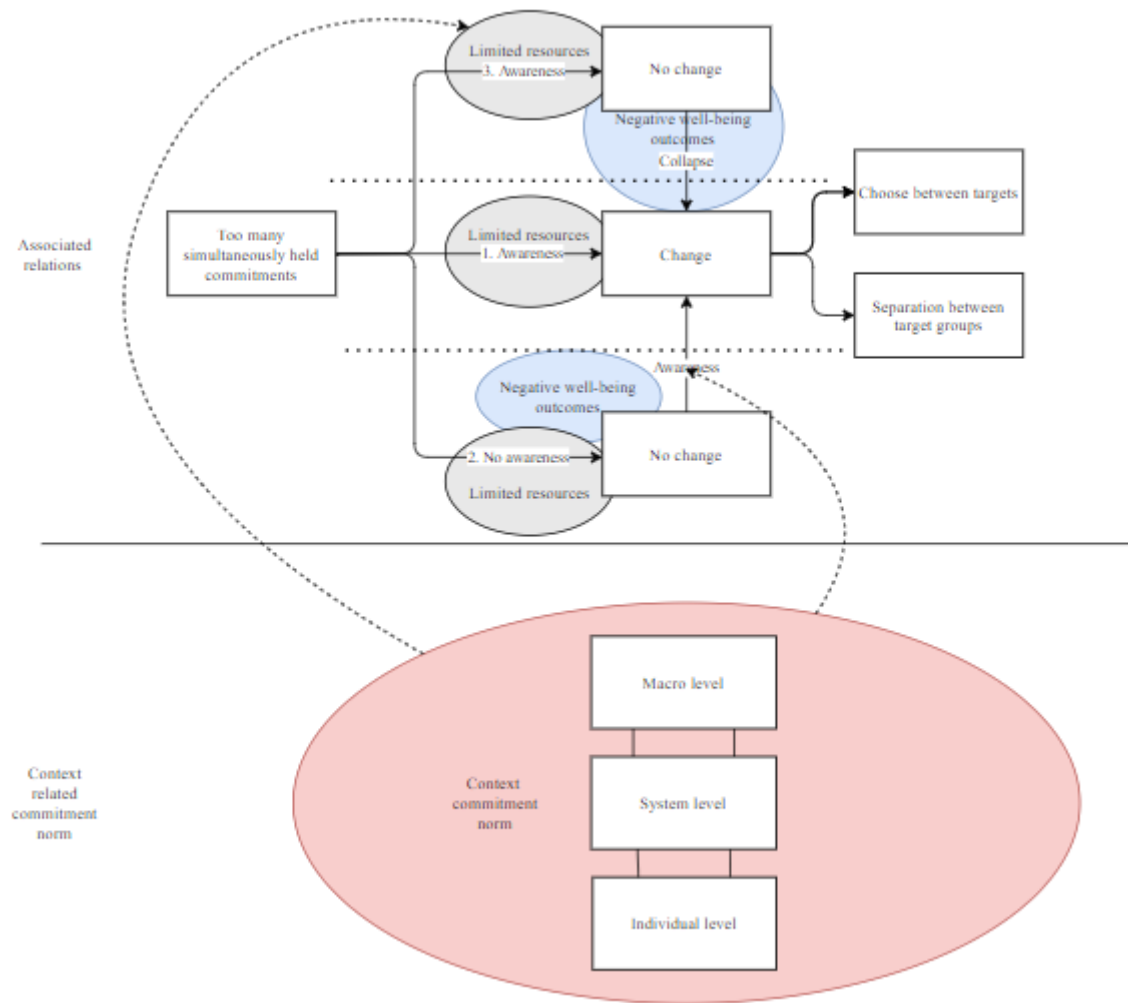


Figure 9: Too many simultaneously held targets - 3rd layer

This chapter provided an exploration of dynamic commitment systems when a commitment bond becomes too strong or when too many targets are simultaneously held. The trajectories represent the behavioural possibilities, its associated relations and the context of commitment norms in such systems. Appendix 5 provides a full image of these trajectories and its contextual layers. The following chapter will elaborate more on how and when over-commitment is part of such a system and how these meanings contribute to theory.



## 5. Discussion

This thesis explored the dynamics of commitment systems of workers at a knowledge intensive organization, in relation to how and when over-commitment is part of such a system. The trajectories represent the behavioural possibilities, its associated relations and the context of commitment norms in commitment systems. In chapter 2 over-commitment is defined as *a non-rational escalation of a network of interrelating commitments to a set of targets*. In relation to the presented findings, over-commitment can be found in the third path. Here, individuals consciously put their own well-being at risk in order to maintain their commitment bonds. This non-rational behaviour escalates, making eventually the whole system of individuals collapse.

The three behavioural paths found can be understood by the application of a System Dynamics (SD) lens (Meadows, 2008). CST does acknowledge that commitment systems are dynamic (Klein et al., 2020), but fails to describe how those dynamics then work. SD does provide such insights by explaining the relationship between structure and behaviour, whereby we can begin to understand how systems work (Meadows, 2008). This chapter will first provide an introduction on SD, followed by what the principles of SD mean in relation to this study.

### 5.1 System Dynamics

#### 5.1.1 An introduction

SD can be understood by stocks and flows (Meadows, 2008). Stocks are the foundation of any system which can be seen or measured at any given time. Flows modify stock and can only be observed over time. Stocks change over time through the actions of one or more flows (inflow vs outflow). System behaviour over time is generated by these stocks and flows together and by feedback loops which connect the two. Often flow rates are linked to the value of the stock and the value of the stock depends on the flow rate. This is a feedback loop, which represents a closed chain of causal connections from a stock, through a set of decisions or rules or physical laws or actions that are dependent on the level of the stock and back again through a flow to change the stock. Feedback loops can either be reinforcing (generating more input to a stock and enhancing whatever change is imposed on it) or balancing (opposes whatever direction of change is imposed on the system). Reinforcing feedback loops in a system show exponential

growth or decay of a stock, whereby balancing feedback loops will try to pull the stock back down or bring it back up.

### 5.1.2 Limits to growth, renewable stock constrained by a renewable stock

No physical existing system can grow forever (Meadows, 2008). Eventually, any growing system will run into some sort of constraint, sooner or later. That constraint is the result of a balancing loop that shifts the dominance of the reinforcing loop driving the growth behaviour. Whether the constraining balancing feedback loops derive from renewable or nonrenewable resources makes a difference in how this growth is likely to end. In SD, growth in such a constrained environment is called the “limits to growth” archetype. This archetype is also seen in the trajectories. Figure 10 presents a simplified causal loop diagram of such a commitment system.

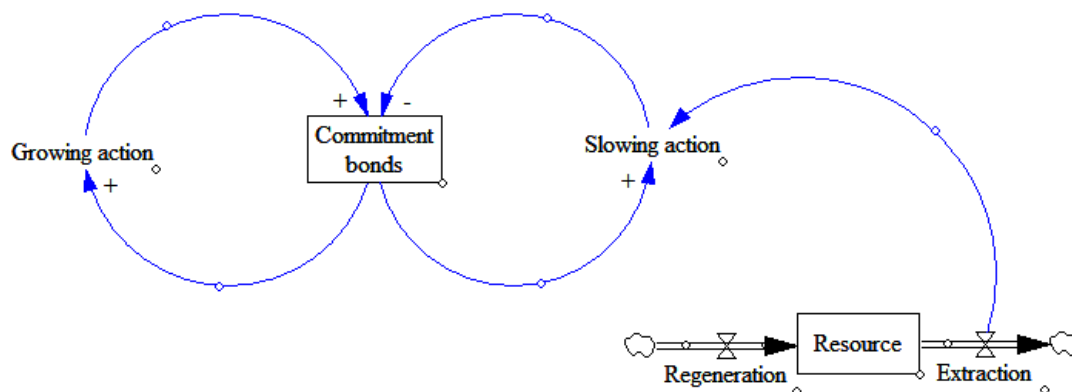


Figure 10: Causal loop diagram commitment system

As a non-living resource, time, attention and energy of individuals will regenerate through a steady input, no matter the current state of the stock, making it a renewable resource (Meadows, 2008). The resource can support extraction indefinitely, but only at a finite flow rate that is equal to the regeneration rate. If the resource is extracted faster, then they may eventually be driven below a critical threshold and become practically non-renewable. Within this knowledge Meadows (2008) shows three sets of possible behaviours of a renewable resource system:

- Overshoot and adjustment to a sustainable equilibrium
- Overshoot beyond that equilibrium followed by oscillations around it, and
- Overshoot followed by collapse of the resource and the industry dependent on the resource (p. 71).

Which outcomes occur depends on two things: the critical threshold beyond the regeneration of the resource and the rapidity and effectiveness of the balancing feedback loop which slows the growth of the system before the resource gets depleted.

## 5.2 Over-commitment as part of a dynamic commitment system

### *5.2.1 Role of feedback loops in commitment systems*

#### **Meaning of the findings**

Commitment system dynamics can be understood from the basis of its structure. Individuals extract from their resources so that they can form and maintain commitment bonds. When this extraction goes faster than the regeneration of their time, attention and energy, they overshoot. The awareness that there is “too many” or “too much”, is in sight of the rapidity and effectiveness of the balancing feedback loop that slows down growth. When individuals are fast aware that they overshoot, the balancing loop will shift dominance and commitment bonds will reach a sustainable equilibrium. When this awareness is delayed, the system will oscillate. Individuals will not immediately see that they extract their resources faster than they regenerate, which throws the system into instability. Lastly, when the balancing feedback loop is very weak, commitments can grow even as the resource is reduced below its threshold ability. The resource and commitment system will collapse as a result of this behaviour.

*P1a: Commitment systems with rapidly and effective balancing feedback loops will overshoot and adjust into a sustainable equilibrium, whereby inflow and outflow of time, energy and attention is equal*

*P1b: Commitment systems with a delay in balancing feedback loops overshoot beyond equilibrium followed by oscillations around it in the systems commitment bond stock, resource stock and extraction rate*

*P1c: Commitment systems with ineffective balancing feedback loops will overshoot beyond the critical threshold of the resource stock making the resource & system collapse*

In chapter 2 over-commitment is defined as *a non-rational escalation of a network of interrelating commitments to a set of targets*. In relation to the presented findings, over-commitment can be found in the third path. Here we can speak of a non-rational escalation, because individuals consciously overshoot beyond the critical threshold of their resources, whereby time, attention and energy of individuals has no chance to regenerate. As a result, individuals experience several negative well-being outcomes, but still freely choose to maintain their system in the way it is. When this situation goes on for too long, the commitment system collapses. This will eventually stop the experience of over-commitment in one's commitment system.

*P2: Over-commitment is part of a commitment system when the system consist of an ineffective balancing feedback loop and whereby extraction from the resource stock overshoots beyond the critical threshold of an individual, making the system collapse*

### **Theoretical contribution**

Firstly, this finding contributes to the exploration of the dynamics of commitment systems. Where CST acknowledges the dynamic aspects of a commitment system (Klein et al., 2020), it does not show how those dynamics then work. Applying a SD lens, we can start to understand how a dynamic commitment system behaves. Here we see that the awareness of individuals is represented by a balancing feedback loop that slows down growth of the commitment system. The rapidity and effectiveness of that balancing feedback loops explains how, when and to what extremes individuals will overshoot the time, attention and energy they have available to form commitments.

Secondly, this finding shows how over-commitment is part of such a dynamic commitment system. Over-commitment represents a certain behavioural outcome of system

structure, whereby the concept can be captured when individuals consciously put their own well-being at risk in order to maintain their commitment bonds. They exhaust their own time, attention and energy that they have available till a point where they just cannot take it anymore. This finding clears the existing ambiguity whether or not there are limits to form commitments (e.g. Klein et al. 2012; Reichers, 1985). SD shows how no physical growing system can grow forever and that a resource never is limitless (Meadows, 2008).

Thirdly, this finding shows how excessive commitment and too many simultaneously held targets always represent a temporary situation. Eventually, every existing system will run into some sort of constrain (Meadows, 2008). This also applies for growing commitment systems. Over-commitment hereby reflects a situation which eventually will be forced into change, whereby resources get the chance to regenerate.

Fourthly, this finding devotes the methodological contribution of retrospectively sensemaking. Using participatory visual methods combined with CIT, enabled us to understand the dynamic aspects of a commitment system in relation to the construct of over-commitment. As stated in chapter 3, participatory visual methods can reveal those aspects of change and experiences that rarely come to the surface (Vince & Warren, 2012). This study showed how this method has significant contributions in exploring commitment systems.

Lastly, the abductive approach used, facilitated the embedding of SD into this research. Using this approach allowed for iterations and comparison between theory and empirical material (Cross & Swarts, 2020). In doing so, it allowed for SD to make its entry into this study, which thereby contributed into rich insights.

### **Limitations & future research**

Despite the interesting contributions, the role of feedback loops in commitment system has to be considered with caution due to methodological limitations. This study did not actively search to find how commitment systems behave over time. Based on existing literature three sub-questions were developed regarding the strength, number & coupling and volitional nature/duration of commitment bonds. These sub-questions seem to explore certain characteristics of over-commitment, rather than behaviour over time. The trajectories and its associated relations and context related commitment norms emerged from the data. Future research is needed, which builds upon the findings of this study, exploring the dynamics of a commitment system, using SD theory and methodology. For example, the behaviour of

commitment systems can be visualized using causal loop diagrams (Meadows, 2008). In doing so, CST can be methodologically advanced by the addition of SD.

### **Practical implications**

This finding provides insights on the role that feedback has in a commitment system, and how over-commitment is represented as a result of delaying/ineffective balancing feedback loops. From now on, the trick for individuals and organizations is to recognize the latent behaviours and see which conditions release those behaviours. It is possible to rearrange structures and conditions to reduce the probability of destructive behaviour and encourage the possibility of beneficial ones (Meadows, 2008). The ‘limits to growth’ archetype is very common in the world of system dynamics. Using the knowledge behind this archetype is most useful when it is used in advance to see how the cumulative effects of continued growth might lead to future problems (Kim, 2000). The archetype can be used to explore what kind of pressures are building up at an individual level that results in growth of commitment bonds. Thereby, we can look for ways to relieve pressure of the resources individuals hold, before we reach beyond the critical threshold, which potentially results in negative well-being outcomes like stress and burnouts.

#### *5.2.2 Role of commitment norms & awareness*

### **Meaning of the findings**

Context related commitment norms play a key role in the awareness of individuals. We see that when feedback loops are fast and effective, individuals will not be conscious of the underlying commitment norms that they hold. However, when this feedback proceeds slower/less effective, individuals become aware (or will be pointed out) that they violate their norms. Saying this, individuals will only be aware of the commitment norms that they hold, when they violate that norm, and this then can act as a trigger to change one's commitment system.

*P3a: Individuals who do not violate the commitment norms that they hold, will not be aware of these norms*

*P3b: Individuals become aware of the commitment norms that they hold, once they violate those norms and thereby adapt their commitment system in order to stop this violation*

Additionally, we see situations where individuals are fully aware that they violate certain commitment norms. These situations represent how commitment norms can differ across all three levels. In this example one can violate macro and/or system level norms, when they impose themselves with even stricter individual level norms (based on certain attitudes, behaviours and emotions). When a commitment system is imposed by such a strict role, this can have a delaying effect on the awareness of individuals that they overshoot their resources. Building further upon the notion that awareness of overshooting is related to an ineffective/delayed balancing feedback loop, we can say that individuals who impose themselves with strict commitment norms, have a higher risk of over-committed behaviour.

*P3c: Strict commitment norms on individual level act as a delaying factor in balancing feedback loops, making it more likely to result in over-commitment*

### **Theoretical contribution**

This finding contributes by providing new insights on the notion of context related commitment norms. However, CST does acknowledge the importance of context in a commitment system, it does not refer to the impact of commitment norms. This study contributes by providing a normative conceptual layer in the exploration of commitment systems. Other studies have already acknowledged the impact of commitment norms (e.g. Wasti et al. 2016). This study contributes by integrating this knowledge into a systems perspective.

Additionally, these findings show similarities with ERI literature. In this line of research, there is spoken of a person-specific component reflecting a set of attitudes behaviours and emotions. This study show how individual level commitment norms play a role in delaying balancing feedback loops, making it more likely to result in over-commitment.

### **Limitations & future research**

Despite the interesting contribution, the findings have limitations. One of the main limitations of ERI literature is that it shows conceptual overlap and ambiguity. The addition of (individual level) commitment norms, create a risk in becoming a composite of related concepts. Therefore, this finding has to be interpreted with caution.

Following, this reflects the context related commitment norms. This study has been conducted in a very specific context, where individuals are pressured by high workloads. Many

of the context related commitment norms referred to the work environment of the participants. It can be assumed that in this sample, individuals hold strict commitment norms than in a different context. Future research is needed to explore if commitment norms have the same role in awareness and over-commitment as in the context of this study. Additionally, future research can.

### **Practical implications**

This finding provides insights for individuals, organization and HR in how commitment norms impose one's commitment system. Being aware of these commitment norms creates understanding of your own behaviour and the behaviour of others. We can see how individuals can feel pressured by different commitment norms imposed by their system (an organization that finds it normal for employees to make extra hours/a partner who does not understand your strong commitment to your work). This study shows that you are not aware of those norms, till you violate them, which can be cause for conflict.

Additionally, we see how individuals who impose strict commitment norms in their system have a higher risk of over-commitment. These insights contribute to the awareness that these individuals can seek to adapt such a commitment norm, before we reach the critical threshold.



## 6. Conclusion

This study has shed light on the construct over-commitment, which has been under researched and suffered from conceptual unclarity. In this study over-commitment has been developed on the basis of Commitment System Theory as a *non-rational escalation of a network of interrelating commitments to a set of targets*. By providing a new conceptualization of the construct, this study reconnects and embeds over-commitment in CST. By doing so, future research can develop, contribute and study over-commitment, building a coherent system of commitment. This study answers the question:

*How does over-commitment develop as (part of) a dynamic commitment system?*

The dynamics of commitment systems are presented as trajectories, reflecting excessive commitment and too many simultaneously held targets. Over-commitment develops as a behavioural outcome of such a dynamic commitment system. Hereby, the behavioural outcome of over-commitment is the result of individuals who consciously overshoot their own time, attention and energy below a point of critical threshold, so these resources have no chance to regenerate. As a result, individuals experience several negative well-being outcomes, but still freely choose to maintain their system in the way it is. Individuals hereby hold on to their commitment bonds “for too long”. Balancing feedback loops who should slow down system growth are delayed/ineffective. This study shows how this ineffectiveness can be the result of context related commitment norms which are imposed on the individual, which implies an urge to perform behaviours whereby they sacrifice themselves for their commitment bond. Over-commitment behaviour is not sustainable and will eventually collapse, resulting in a change inside the commitment system. By this means over-commitment is a temporary situation, because no physical system can grow forever (Meadows, 2008).

## References

- Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1988). Intense Loyalty in Organizations: A Case Study of College Athletics. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 33(3), 401-417. doi:10.2307/2392716
- Angle, H., & Perry, J. (1986). Dual Commitment and Labor-Management Relationship Climates. *Academy of Management Journal*, 29. doi:10.2307/255858
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Bell, E., & Bryman, A. (2007). The Ethics of Management Research: An Exploratory Content Analysis. *British Journal of Management*, 18, 63-77.  
doi:10.1111/j.1467-8551.2006.00487.x
- Cooper-Hakim, A., & Viswesvaran, C. (2005). The construct of work commitment: testing an integrative framework. *Psychological bulletin*, 131(2), 241-259.
- Cross, D., & Swart, J. (2020). Professional Fluidity: Reconceptualising the Professional Status of Self-Employed Neo-professionals. *Organization Studies*.  
doi:10.1177/0170840620964985
- Cuthill, M. (2002). Exploratory research: citizen participation, local government and sustainable development in Australia. *Sustainable Development*, 10(2), 79-89.  
doi:10.1002/sd.185
- Demerouti, E., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. (2001). The Job Demands–Resources Model of Burnout. *The Journal of applied psychology*, 86, 499-512. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.499
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P.R. (2015). *Management Research: Theory and Practice* (5th ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

- Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The critical incident technique. *Psychological bulletin*, 51(4), 327-358.  
doi:10.1037/h0061470
- French, J. R. P., Caplan, R. D., & Van Harrison, R. (1982). *The mechanisms of job stress and strain*. Chichester [Sussex]; New York: Wiley.
- Gouldner, A. (1960). The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement. *American Sociological Review*, 25(2), 161-178. doi:10.2307/2092623
- Gross, N. C., Mason, W. S., & McEachern, A. W. (1958). *Explorations in Role Analysis: Studies of the School Superintendency Role*: Wiley.
- Herr, R. M., Li, J., Loerbroeks, A., Angerer, P., Siegrist, J., & Fischer, J. E. (2017). Effects and mediators of psychosocial work characteristics on somatic symptoms six years later: Prospective findings from the Mannheim Industrial Cohort Studies (MICS). *J Psychosom Res*, 98, 27-33. doi:10.1016/j.jpsychores.2017.05.003
- Johnson, R. E., Groff, K. W., & Taing, M. U. (2009). Nature of the interactions among organizational commitments: Complementary, competitive or synergistic? *British Journal of Management*, 20(4), 431-447. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8551.2008.00592.x
- Karasek, R., & Theorell, T. (1990). *Healthy work : stress, productivity and the reconstruction of working life*: New York (N.Y.) : Basic books.
- Kegye, A., Czeglédi, E., Zana, A., Csikai, E. L., & Hegedus, K. (2020). Influential factors of well-being among Hungarian female hospice workers examined through structural equation modelling. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 28(5), 1560-1568. doi:10.1111/hsc.12980

- Kim, D.H. (2000). *System Archetypes I: Diagnosing Systemic Issues and Designing High-Leverage Interventions*. Retrieved from [https://thesystemsthinker.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Systems-Archetypes-I-TRSA01\\_pk.pdf](https://thesystemsthinker.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Systems-Archetypes-I-TRSA01_pk.pdf)
- Kinnie, N., & Swart, J. (2011). Committed to Whom? Professional Knowledge Worker Commitment in Cross-Boundary Organisations. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 22, 21-38. doi:10.1111/j.1748-8583.2011.00172.x
- Klein, H., Solinger, O., & Duflot, V. (2020). Commitment System Theory: The Evolving Structure of Commitments to Multiple Targets. *Academy of Management Review*. doi:10.5465/amr.2018.0031
- Klein, H. J., Brinsfield, C. T., & Cooper, J. T. (2020). The experience of commitment in the contemporary workplace: An exploratory reexamination of commitment model antecedents. *Human Resource Management*. doi:10.1002/hrm.22040
- Klein, H. J., Molloy, J. C., & Brinsfield, C. T. (2012). Reconceptualizing workplace commitment to redress a stretched construct: Revisiting assumptions and removing confounds. *The Academy of Management Review*, 37(1), 130-151.
- Klein, H. J., Wesson, M. J., Hollenbeck, J. R., & Alge, B. J. (1999). Goal commitment and the goal-setting process: Conceptual clarification and empirical synthesis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(6), 885-896. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.84.6.885
- Li, J., Herr, R. M., Allen, J., Stephens, C., & Alpass, F. (2017). Validating the short measure of the Effort-Reward Imbalance Questionnaire in older workers in the context of New Zealand. *Journal of Occupational Health*, 59(6), 495-505. doi:10.1539/joh.17-0044-OA
- Li, N., Zhang, L., Li, X., & Lu, Q. (2021). The influence of operating room nurses' job stress on burnout and organizational commitment: The moderating effect of over-commitment. *J Adv Nurs*, 77(4), 1772-1782. doi:10.1111/jan.14725

- Martela, F. (2015). Fallible Inquiry with Ethical Ends-in-View: A Pragmatist Philosophy of Science for Organizational Research. *Organization Studies*, 36, 537-563. doi:10.1177/0170840614559257
- Mathieu, J. E., & Zajac, D. M. (1990). A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment. *Psychological bulletin*, 108(2), 171-194. doi:10.1037//0033-2909.108.2.171
- Meadows, D. H. (2008). Thinking in systems: A primer. chelsea green publishing.
- Meyer, A. (1991). Visual Data in Organizational Research. *Organization Science - ORGAN SCI*, 2, 218-236. doi:10.1287/orsc.2.2.218
- Meyer, J. P. (2016). *Handbook of Employee Commitment*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 1(1), 61-89. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822(91)90011-Z
- Meyer, J. P., & Herscovitch, L. (2001). Commitment in the workplace: toward a general model. *Human Resource Management Review*, 11(3), 299-326. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822(00)00053-X
- Meyer, J. P., & Morin, A. J. S. (2016). A person-centered approach to commitment research: Theory, research, and methodology. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37(4), 584-612. doi:https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2085
- Meyer, J. P., Stanley, D. J., Herscovitch, L., & Topolnytsky, L. (2002). Affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization: A meta-analysis of antecedents,

- correlates, and consequences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 61(1), 20-52. doi:10.1006/jvbe.2001.1842
- Monks, C. P., & Smith, P. K. (2006). Definitions of bullying: Age differences in understanding of the term, and the role of experience. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 24(4), 801-821. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1348/026151005X82352>
- Morin, A. J. (2016). Person-centered research strategies in commitment research. In *Handbook of employee commitment*: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Mowday, R. T., Porter, L. W., & Steers, R. M. (1982). *Employee-organization linkages : the psychology of commitment, absenteeism, and turnover*. New York: Academic Press.
- Randall, D. M. (1988). Multiple roles and organizational commitment. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 9(4), 309-317. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030090403>
- Reichers, A. E. (1985). A review and reconceptualization of organizational commitment. *The Academy of Management Review*, 10(3), 465-476. doi:10.2307/258128
- Salancik, G. R. (1977). Commitment and the control of organizational behavior and belief. In B. Staw & G. Salancik (Eds.), *New directions in organizational behavior*. Chicago: St. Clair Press.
- Saunders, M. N. K. (2012). Choosing Research Participants. In G. Symon, & Cassell, C. (Eds.), *Qualitative organizational research: Core methods and current challenges*. 35-52: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Schadenhofer, P., Kundi, M., Abrahamian, H., Blasche, G., Stummer, H., & Kautzky-Willer, A. (2018). Job-related meaningfulness moderates the association between over-commitment and emotional exhaustion in nurses. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 26(7), 820-832. doi:10.1111/jonm.12602

- Shamir, B. (1991). Meaning, Self and Motivation in Organizations. *Organization Studies*, 12(3), 405-424. doi:10.1177/017084069101200304
- Sharma, R. R. (2017). A Competency Model for Management Education for Sustainability. *Vision*, 21(2), x–xv. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0972262917700970>
- Siegrist, J. (2001). A theory of occupational stress. In *Stress in the workplace: Past, present and future*. (pp. 52-66). Philadelphia, PA, US: Whurr Publishers.
- Siegrist, J. (2002). Effort-reward imbalance at work and health. In *Historical and current perspectives on stress and health*. (pp. 261-291). US: Elsevier Science/JAI Press.
- Siegrist, J., Starke, D., Chandola, T., Godin, I., Marmot, M., Niedhammer, I., & Peter, R. (2004). The measurement of effort-reward imbalance at work: European comparisons. *Soc Sci Med*, 58(8), 1483-1499. doi:10.1016/s0277-9536(03)00351-4
- Solinger, O., van Olffen, W., & Roe, R. (2007). Beyond the Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment. *Maastricht : METEOR, Maastricht Research School of Economics of Technology and Organization, Research Memoranda*.
- Solinger, O. N., van Olffen, W., Roe, R. A., & Hofmans, J. (2013). On becoming (Un)committed: A taxonomy and test of newcomer onboarding scenarios. *Organization Science*, 24(6), 1640-1661. doi:10.1287/orsc.1120.0818
- Somers, H. (2005). *Round-Trip Translation: What Is It Good For?* Paper presented at the Proceedings of the Australasian Language Technology Workshop, Sydney, Australia. Retrieved from <https://www.aclweb.org/anthology/U05-1019>
- Timmermans, S., & Tavory, I. (2012). Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis. *Sociological Theory*, 30(3), 167-186. doi:10.1177/0735275112457914

- Van Rossenberg, Y., Klein, H., Asplund, K., Bentein, K., Breitsohl, H., Cohen, A., . . . Yalabik, Z. (2018). The future of workplace commitment: key questions and directions. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 27, 153. doi:10.1080/1359432X.2018.1443914
- Vince, R., & Warren, S. (2012). Participatory Visual Methods. In G. Symon, & Cassell, C. (Eds.), *Qualitative organizational research: Core methods and current challenges*. 275-295: Sage Publications Ltd.



## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Systematic literature review

An overview of the systematic literature is provided in a separate Excel document.

Appendix 2: ERI Questionnaire – 6 items over-commitment  
(Siegrist, 2004)

*Overcommitment*

- OC1            I get easily overwhelmed by time pressures at work.
- OC2            As soon as I get up in the morning I start thinking about work problems.
- OC3            When I get home, I can easily relax and ‘switch off’ work.
- OC4            People close to me say I sacrifice too much for my job.
- OC5            Work rarely lets me go, it is still in my mind when I go to bed.
- OC6            If I postpone something that I was supposed to do today, I’ll have trouble sleeping at night.

## Appendix 3: Interview guide

*English*

### **Interview Protocol - Exploring Commitment Systems (ECS)**

*An international collaboration towards exploring Commitment System Theory, in relation to work-life balance, over-commitment, and misbehaviour*

#### Community of Practice

##### Group 3

Björn Kruijshoop

Eliana Gavioli

Flávia Czarneski

Iman te Wildt

Luana Peixoto

Stephanie de Koning

#### **Pre interview assignment:**

Hello, you are invited to participate in this study about the commitment system. We would like to learn how you establish and organize your commitments to different aspects of your life. Commitment is an emotional bond of identification that can be directed at the same time to several Targets. A connection that leads us to seek to accomplish things in the best way possible, that leads us to act in favor of that target to which we feel committed. *Can entail any sorts of bonds, or things that you feel connected to/responsible for.*

Everything you share with us will be completely confidential, your identity will remain anonymous, and the results will be used only for academic purposes. It is important that you know that you can stop your participation at any time, without any prejudice.

As discussed during the interview invitation, we would like you to first perform an assignment, **and there is no right or wrong way to complete it.** The idea is that you feel comfortable and during the interview we will talk about the material you produce. If you feel like you are stuck or have any questions, call or email your contact person.

**The assignment:**

**You have just received the instructions for our pre-interview exercise. We send you the instructions some time before, as you have time to do it at the best time for you. The time to do this task can be anywhere from 30 minutes to 1 hour. Please schedule your time to do the full exercise and let us know.**

**Step 1** - separate 2 sheets of paper and material to draw on it

(it can be just a pen, but if you prefer you can also use marker pens, colored pencils, various pens, etc., it is only important that the chosen material provides well marked and visible lines)

**Step 2** - On one of the sheets draw or represent as you prefer the **groups, entities, people, targets, values or things** to which you have committed yourself. It is important to represent yourself (ME) in the center of the figure, and the other elements around you, the closer to you the more intense and relevant and on the contrary, less intense and relevant. You can also demonstrate perceptions and feelings through colors and others visual elements.

(you may freely represent them in any way you wish, creativity is welcome, but not mandatory)

**Step 3** - Look at the image you have created, and think about whether it is a representation of all the aspects, people or things in your life that you feel committed to?

→ **If no**, you can add to the image as much as you feel necessary.

→ **If yes**, move on to the next step.

**Step 4** - Looking again at the image you have produced, evaluate whether the visual representation you have made of your commitment bonds is in balance (distribution of dedication/ time / emotion / attention spent with/on targets).

→ **If not**, try to remember a time in your life when you felt most balanced: Can you represent all the targets, things, entities, people, or groups to which you have committed yourself? (use the second sheet to represent this time)

→ **If yes**, was there a time in life when you felt you were less balanced? Can you represent all the targets, things, entities, people, or groups to which you have committed yourself? (use the second sheet to represent this moment)

When you finish your 2 representations, I kindly ask that you take a picture of each one and return the short questionnaire on the next page. Please send it to your contact before the interview begins.

**Thank you very much!**

### **Short Questionnaire**

**Could you please indicate your...**

**Age:**

**Gender:**

**Family status (marital status, children, etc.):**

**Country:**

**City:**

**Profession:**

**Organization/Company type:**

(commerce, industry, services)

**Do you have any responsibility for other employees (if yes, how many?):**

(leading, coordinating or managing)

### **Interview Protocol:**

(Greeting), first of all we would like to thank you once again for your willingness to participate in this study.

Before we begin the interview I would like to reassure you that all our conversation is confidential, your identity will be kept confidential, all content of the conversation will be used only for academic purposes, and the recording of the interview is made only for the purpose of transcription for analysis.

Do you authorize this interview to be recorded?

(the person must consent to continuity)

(if you are uncomfortable with the video, check to see if you can record the audio only)

Are there any questions you would like to ask before we begin?

(if there are any questions, please answer them)

We will then begin our interview, but it is important to remember that you can interrupt the process at any time without any prejudice or penalty.

Please take your first drawing

### **Open Question**

What is commitment for you?

- *(or: What do you think when you think about commitment?)*

### **Drawing**

Please discuss the two drawings in detail with your interviewee. Ask them about these topics, and ask follow-up questions in this conversation

**Intro question:** Can you tell me about your first drawing process, where you started, the paths you took, and things you thought about while drawing.

- ☐ Thoughts during drawing
- ☐ Reasoning behind drawing a certain way
- ☐ Relation between targets
- ☐ Most important target

**Intro question:** Can you tell me now about the second drawing (same way that the first)

- Imbalance & difference between drawings

**Last question before moving on to the next subject:** When talking about your drawing, did you miss anything, or do you remember a target that is not in the drawing right now?

### **Work-Life Balance**

- **Intro question:** *Could you explain more about why you differentiated the design from your drawings from balance to the imbalanced drawing?*

- **Intro question:** Within the imbalanced drawing, could you tell me more about the different demands the commitments had for you? How did you manage?

And please ask follow-up questions about examples and experiences of the respondent. Think about:

- ☐ Difference between work & life
- ☐ Feelings towards balance, know when in balance
- ☐ Conflict in resources
- ☐ Conflict in goals
- ☐ Conflict in targets
- ☐ Commitments separated
- ☐ Disconnect to target
- ☐ Stress examples/experiences/situations/effects
- ☐ Role from targets in (im)balance

### **Over-commitment**

- **Intro question:** Have you ever experienced a situation where you felt that you were too committed to a target?
- **Intro question:** Have you ever experienced a situation where you felt that you were committed to too many targets at the same time?
- **Intro question:** Have you ever experienced a situation where you felt that your commitment towards a target lasted longer than you wanted to?

And please ask follow-up questions about examples and experiences of the respondent. Think about:

- ☐ Ask for example
- ☐ Effects
- ☐ Role from supervisor
- ☐ Role from colleagues
- ☐ Role from domestic/personal side

### **Misbehaviour**

- Let's return to the drawing, you have placed yourself in the middle, and some were a bit further away. Could you please describe a situation that best explains to me, why this target is further away from you than others?
- Did others in this situation behave differently than you did?
  - Did you agree with how they behaved? Or would you consider this misbehavior?
- Did you feel the pressure to also behave in this way? Can you explain/ give examples?

#### NOTE - DEFINITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL MISBEHAVIOUR:

*“Organizational Misbehavior as an intentional action by members of organizations, which defies and violates shared organizational norms and expectations and/or customs, standards of proper conduct, and even social and moral values. Thus, this approach allows one to distinguish accidental or unintentional behavior caused by mistakes, misunderstandings, or unconscious negligence.” (Vardi & Weitz, 1996).*

And please ask follow-up questions about examples and experiences of the respondent. Think about:

- ☐ Reflecting on that (misbehaving) target
- ☐ Conflicts caused by misbehaviour
- ☐ Peer pressure leading to misbehaviour
- ☐ Personal- reasons leading to misbehaviour
- ☐ Consequences / impact of this situation

“Thank you for your open attitude and sharing this. Lastly, I would like to ask you how you feel about the following hypothetical scenario:”

#### SCENARIO

“You know an professional in a public agency who has the responsibility of managing the accounts of the insurance companies. This professional has a daughter who, at the moment, is pregnant and really needs this job. The organization where she works is going through a difficult time, because they will have to pay several life insurance due to a serious air accident. The fear



that this company goes bankrupt influences this professional to approve extra money for this company, as a way to preserve the jobs of the future mother and the other workers.”

1. What do you think about this situation?
2. Does this happen often in organisations?
3. Have you ever considered doing something *like* this?
4. How do you think your commitments (that you have drawn) are related to this type of situation?

We are done! Those were all the questions I had to ask.

I would like to thank you once again for your availability and remind you that the interview data is confidential, your identity will be kept confidential, and the data will be used for academic purposes only.

Would you like to make any observations, questions or comments?

(...)

Thank you

--- Stop recording ---

**Pre interview assignment:**

Hallo, je bent uitgenodigd om deel te nemen in dit onderzoek naar commitment systemen. We zouden graag meer inzicht krijgen in hoe jouw commitments tot stand komen en hoe deze zijn georganiseerd binnen verschillende facetten van jouw leven. Commitment is een vrijwillige psychologische verbintenis die toewijding en verantwoordelijkheid reflecteert. Commitment kan worden ervaren naar meerdere doeleinden (een persoon, een groep, een entiteit, een doel, een waarde ect.).

Alles wat je met ons deelt is volledig vertrouwelijk, je identiteit blijft anoniem en de resultaten worden alleen voor academische doeleinden gebruikt. We willen je er graag aan herinneren dat je op ieder moment vrij bent om te stoppen met je deelname.

Zoals vermeld in de uitnodiging, vragen we je voorafgaand aan het interview een kleine opdracht uit te voeren. **Hierbij willen wij graag benadrukken dat er geen goede of foute manier is om deze taak uit te voeren**, het gaat erom dat jij je comfortabel voelt. Tijdens het interview willen we graag deze opdracht met jou bespreken. Als je het idee hebt vast te lopen, of heb je vragen, bel of e-mail je contactpersoon.

**Stap 1** - Pak twee aparte vellen papier om op te tekenen.

**Stap 2** - Begin op één van de twee vellen papier en teken of representeer de **groepen, entiteiten, mensen, doeleinden, waarden of dingen** waaraan jij je gecommitteerd (toegewijd aan/verantwoordelijk voor) voelt. Het is belangrijk om jezelf in het midden neer te zetten (IK) en alle andere elementen daar omheen. Wanneer een element dichterbij staat, betekent dit dat de commitment naar dit doeleinde groter is. Verder weg betekent dus een minder mate van commitment. Je kunt ook percepties en gevoelens weergeven door kleuren en andere visuele elementen te gebruiken (je bent vrij in de manier waarop je dit presenteert, creativiteit is welkom maar niet verplicht).

Tekenen mag gewoon met een pen, maar je kunt ook met markers, gekleurde potloden, verschillende pennen etc. werken als je dat liever wilt. Het is alleen belangrijk dat de lijnen goed zichtbaar zijn.

**Stap 3** - Evalueer jouw tekening. Zijn alle aspecten, mensen of dingen in jouw leven waarnaar jij commitment voelt voldoende weergegeven?

→ **Zo nee**, voeg toe.

→ **Zo ja**, ga door naar de volgende stap.

**Stap 4** - Pak het tweede vel papier. Wij willen je vragen om nu nog een keer je commitments te representeren of tekenen. Evalueer jouw eerste tekening. Is deze visuele representatie van jouw commitments in balans (verdeling van toewijding/tijd/emotie/aandacht die je aan de doeleinden besteed)?

→ **Zo nee**, denk terug aan een moment in je leven waarin je wél (of meer) balans ervaarde. Gebruik het tweede vel papier en teken of representeer jouw commitments op dát moment.

→ **Zo ja**, denk terug aan een moment in je leven waarin je geen (of minder) balans ervaarde. Gebruik het tweede vel papier en teken of representeer jouw commitments op dát moment.

**Stap 5** - Bedankt voor het tekenen. Wil je ook de volgende vragen nog beantwoorden?

**Leeftijd:**

**Geslacht:**

**Familie status (Partner/getrouwd/kinderen, etc.):**

**Woonplaats:**

**Functie:**

## **Draag je verantwoordelijkheid voor andere medewerkers? (Zo ja, hoeveel?):**

(Leidinggeven, coördineren, managen etc.)

**Stap 6** - Wanneer je stap 1 tot en met stap 5 hebt afgerond, waren we je foto's van beide tekeningen te maken. Wil je deze foto's, samen met de ingevulde vragenlijst opsturen naar contactpersoon sturen voorafgaand aan het interview.

### **Interview Protocol:**

(Begroeting), allereerst willen we je bedanken voor je deelname in dit onderzoek.

Voordat we het interview beginnen wil ik je graag toestemming vragen voor opname van dit interview? Hierbij willen we je er graag van verzekeren dat alles binnen ons gesprek vertrouwelijk is, je identiteit wordt geheim gehouden. De volledige inhoud van dit gesprek wordt enkel voor academische doeleinden gebruikt en de opname is enkel voor het transcriberen en analyseren.

(De persoon moet goedkeuring geven om door te gaan).

(Als de respondent zich oncomfortabel voelt bij video opname, check of je alleen kan opnemen met enkel audio).

Zijn er vragen die je zou willen stellen voordat we beginnen?

(Als er vragen zijn, beantwoord deze)

Dan kunnen we beginnen met ons interview. Het is belangrijk om te onthouden dat je het proces op ieder moment kan onderbreken als er vragen zijn of als je je oncomfortabel voelt.

--- START OPNAME ---

### **Open Vraag**

Wat betekent commitment voor jou?

- *(Of: Waar denk jij aan als jij denkt aan commitment)*

## **Tekening**

(Bespreek de twee tekeningen in detail met de respondent. Vraag hen naar de onderwerpen en stel vervolgvragen in het gesprek)

**Introductie vraag:** Kan je me vertellen over het tekenproces... waar begon je... welk pad nam je... en wat waren dingen waar je aan dacht tijdens het tekenen?

- Gedachten tijdens het tekenproces
- Redenering achter de manier van/keuzes tijdens het tekenen
- Relatie tussen doeleinden
- Meest belangrijke doeleinden

**Introductie vraag:** Kan je me nu meer vertellen over de tweede tekening (dezelfde manier als de eerste)

- Disbalans & verschil tussen de tekeningen

**Laatste vraag voordat je doorgaat naar het volgende onderwerp:** Nu we het over je tekening hebben gehad, heb je iets gemist? Is er nu een commitment die nog niet in de tekening staat?

## **Work-Life Balance**

- **Introductie vraag:** *Kun je uitleggen waarom het ontwerp van de balans en disbalans tekening verschillend is? (wanneer nog niet besproken)*
- **Introductie vraag:** Binnen de tekening met disbalans, kan je me meer vertellen over de verschillende eisen die de commitments voor jouw hadden? Hoe ging je hiermee om?
- **Introductie vraag:** Wat is (of is er) binnen de twee tekeningen de rol van jouw leidinggevende?
  - Is deze leidinggevende iemand die inspireert, motiveert, of/en persoonlijke aandacht heeft voor jou?

Stel follow-up vragen over de voorbeelden en ervaringen van de respondent. Denk aan:

- Verschil tussen werk en privé
- Gevoel bij balans, wanneer weet je dat je in balans bent?
- Conflict in beschikbare middelen

- Conflict in doelen
- Conflict in doeleinden
- Rol van **leidinggevende (in balans en disbalans)**
- Verschillende commitments
- Verbreken van een commitment
- Stress voorbeelden/ervaringen/situaties/effecten
- Rol van de doeleinden in (dis)balans

### Over-commitment

- **Introductie vraag:** Heb je ooit een situatie ervaren waar je het gevoel had dat je **te** gecommitteerd was naar een doeleinden?
- **Introductie vraag:** Heb je ooit een situatie ervaren waar je het gevoel had dat je gecommitteerd was naar **te veel** doeleinden tegelijkertijd?
- **Introductie vraag:** Heb je ooit een situatie ervaren waar je het gevoel had dat je **te lang** commitment naar een doeleinden hebt gehad?

Stel follow-up vragen over de voorbeelden en ervaringen van de respondent. Denk aan:

- Voorbeelden
- Effecten
- Rol van **leidinggevende (evt terugkoppelen naar WLB)**
- Rol van collega's
- Rol van het thuisfront/persoonlijk vlak

### Verwijtbaar gedrag

- Hebben er zich wel eens situaties voorgedaan waarbij de mensen binnen de doeleinden zich gedroegen op een manier waar jij het niet mee eens bent/was? (Het gaat hierbij om gedragingen die de norm / verwachting tart of de standaarden van correct gedrag / sociale en morele waarden overtreedt) Kun je hier meer over vertellen?

- In hoeverre vind je dit gedrag wangedrag / misdraging / ongepast / ethisch gedrag dat niet door de beugel kan?
- Wat deed dat met jouw eigen gedrag? Voelde jij druk om je ook zo te gedragen? Kan je dit uitleggen / voorbeelden geven
- Heeft dit invloed gehad op jouw commitment?

Stel follow-up vragen over de voorbeelden en ervaringen van de respondent. Denk aan:

- Reflectie op het gedrag en reflectie op commitment naar de persoon die dit gedrag vertoont (of target die hij / zij representeert)
- Conflicten veroorzaakt door wangedrag
- Groepsdruk leidend tot wangedrag
- Persoonlijke redenen leidend tot wangedrag
- Consequenties/impact van deze situatie
- Rol van de leidinggevende (evt terugkoppelen naar vorige onderwerpen)

We zijn klaar! Dit waren alle vragen die we wilde stellen. Bedankt voor je openheid! Ik wil je graag nogmaals bedanken voor je beschikbaarheid en je eraan herinneren dat het interview vertrouwelijk is, je identiteit geheim blijft en de data alleen wordt gebruikt voor academische doeleinden.

Heb je nog vragen of opmerkingen of dingen die je zijn opgevallen?

(...)

Bedankt!

--- STOP OPNAME ---

## Appendix 4: Final coding hierarchy

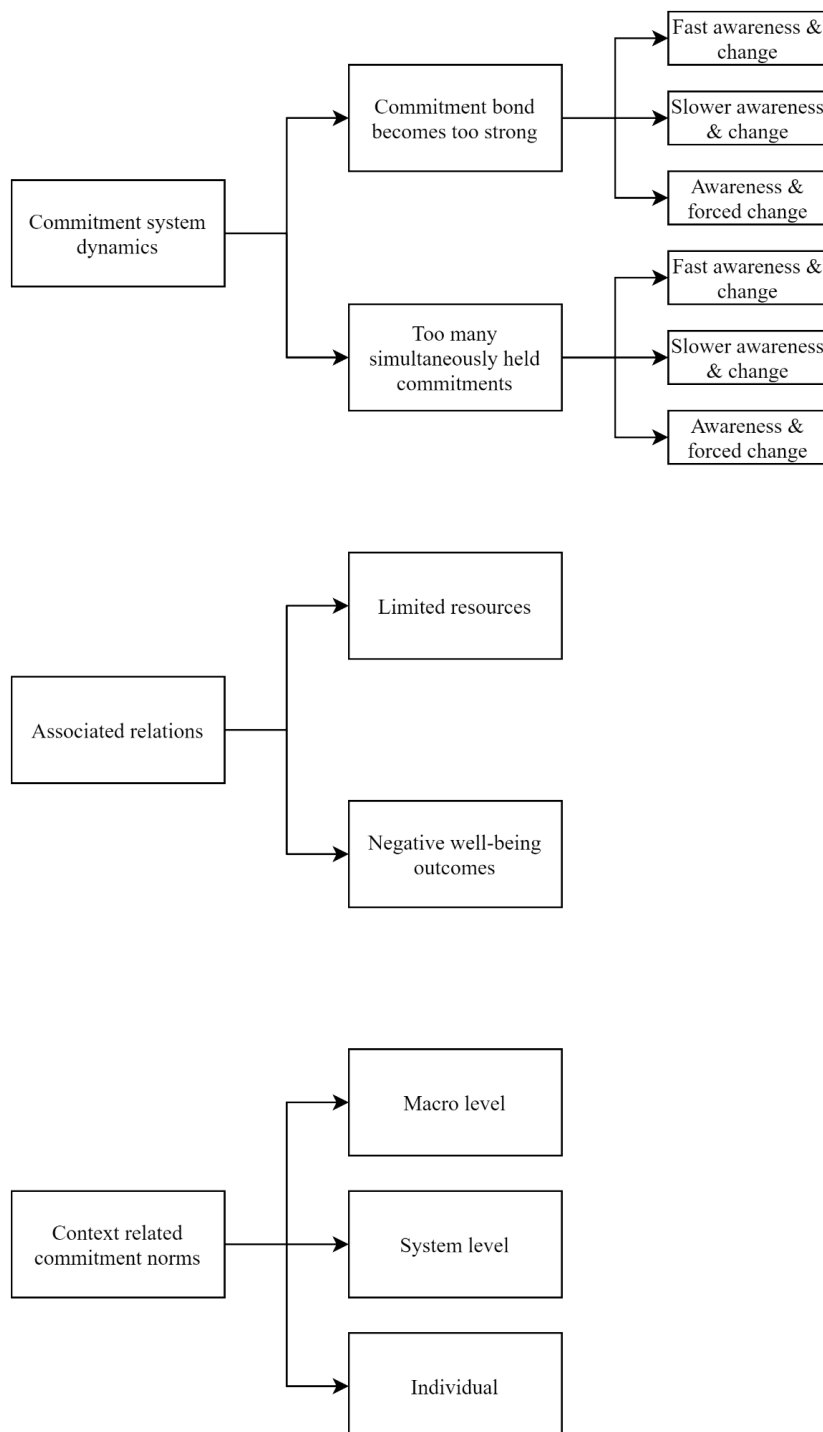


Figure 1: Final coding hierarchy - Thematic analysis



Appendix 5: Commitment system trajectories

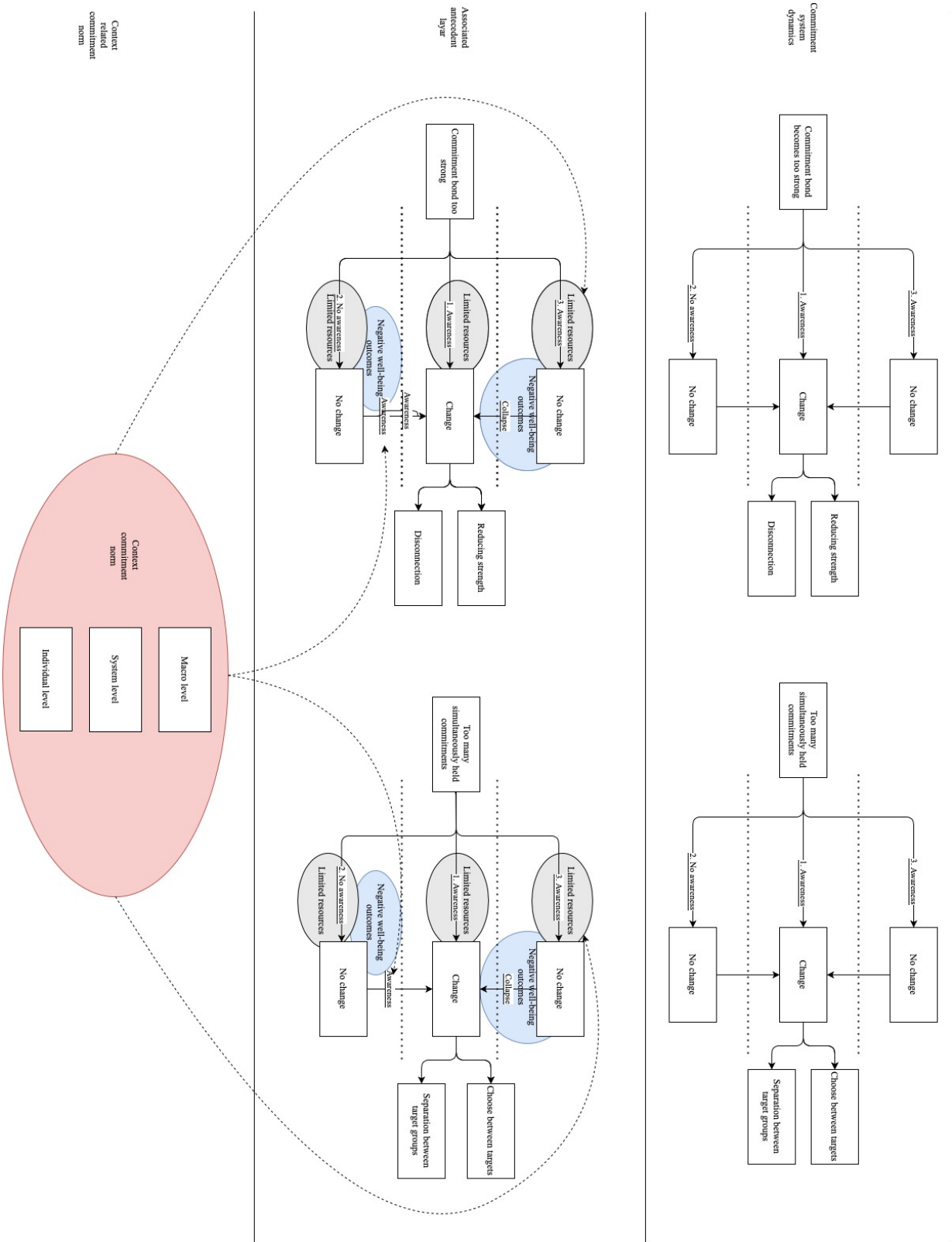


Figure 2: Commitment system trajectories – Full visualization