Norms and the dynamics of advice networks: a case study

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Abstract

The issue of the influence of norms on behavior is as old as sociology itself. This paper explores the effect of a normative homophily (i.e. “sharing the same normative choices”) on the evolution of the advice network among lay judges in a courthouse. Blau’s (1955, 1964) social exchange theory suggests that members select advisors based on the status of the advisor. Additional research shows that members of an organization use similarities with others in ascribed, achieved or inherited characteristics, as well as other kinds of ties, to mitigate the potentially negative effects of this strong status rule. We elaborate and test these theories using data on advisor choice in the Commercial Court of Paris. We use a jurisprudential case about unfair competition (material and “moral” damages), a case that we submitted to all the judges of this court, to test the effect of normative homophily on the selection of advisors, controlling for status effects. Normative homophily is measured by the extent to which two judges are equally “punitive” in awarding damages to plaintiffs. Statistical analyses combine longitudinal advice network data collected among the judges with their normative dispositions. Contrary to what could be expected from conventional sociological theories, we find no selection effect of normative homophily on the choice of advisors. In this case, sharing the same norms and values does not have a mitigating effect and does not contribute to drive the evolution of the network. We argue that status effects, conformity and alignments on positions of opinion leaders in controversies still provide the best insights into the relationship between norms, structure and behavior.

Keywords: advice networks; longitudinal analysis; homophily; norms; social selection; status; learning.

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Introduction

Intra-organizational learning has long been considered an important process in organizations. Learning as a relational process can be captured in part through the study of advice networks. An advice network represents a set of paths through which appropriate information circulates among members of an organized setting. The allocation of this resource through informal ties and interactions reduces the costs of its acquisition during the process of making decisions to solve problems. Members of organizations see expertise and experience as accumulated by the organization, and they rely constantly on advice from others, especially in knowledge intensive organizations.

Blau’s (1955, 1964) social exchange theory suggests that members select advisors based on the status of the advisor. They can thus try to exchange status recognition for advice. Advisors are sensitive to this recognition of their status and this gives them an incentive to share their expertise or judgment with the advice seeker. Because advice networks are usually
shaped by such status games, they are usually highly centralized. They exhibit a pecking order that often closely follows the hierarchical structure of the organization. Research confirms this view (see for example, out of many possible references, Brass, 1984; Krackhardt, 1987, 1990; Barley, 1990; Ibarra and Andrews, 1993; Lazega and Van Duijn, 1997; Rulke and Galaskiewicz, 2000; Cross et al., 2001; Mizruchi and Stearns, 2001; Hansen, 2002; Tsai, 2002; Borgatti and Cross, 2003; Kilduff and Tsai, 2003; McDonald and Westphal, 2003).

However, an additional process is triggered by social exchange of advice for recognition of status. It has been shown that members use similarities with others in ascribed, achieved or inherited characteristics, as well as other kinds of ties, to mitigate the potentially negative effects of this strong status rule for intra-organizational learning. According to McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook (2001), the use of similarities reduces transaction costs between exchange partners and this lowers the exchange rate between advice and status. If costs of advice are lower in the case of similar others, then less status needs to be given in return. This produces the empirically observable phenomenon of homophily in the selection of advisors. In effect, similarity calls for a certain solidarity between exchange partners and because of this solidarity, advice from similar others requires less in terms of giving status recognition.

Our main purpose is to further examine this homophilous mitigation process based on the use of similarities between the advice seeker and the advisor. In this paper we propose an exploratory research on a specific basis for the selection of advisors, namely shared norms and values. We present a network study of advice seeking in the Commercial Court of Paris, a first level court that deals with complex commercial litigation and bankruptcies in the French capital. We use this study to examine the importance of shared norms and values on the selection of advisors.

The Commercial Court of Paris is an interesting institution because it represents a case of institutionalized “joint regulation” of markets. Judges in this court are lay and voluntary (unpaid) judges, experienced business men and women who are elected/co-opted by the local business community at the local Chamber of Commerce. These lay judges are truly judicial. They are sworn in, as any career judge would be. But they still represent a form of cooperation between business and the State in which business manages to be actually part of the State apparatus. In effect, in order to be elected/co-opted, these judges must be sponsored by a trade association. The latter selects candidates who—it hopes—will mobilize the norms of their business sector when making judicial decisions in cases in which they have some degree of discretion. This raises issues of conflicts of interests that have been pointed out as soon as this institution was born (in 1563), but have not prevented survival of the institution for four and a half centuries. The main arguments used by lay judges to legitimize this institution are that they volunteer (they do not receive a salary for their work as a judge) and are therefore less expensive for the government than career judges; and that they pool and share their expertise of business and economics, an expertise that career judges are less likely to have. Seeking and sharing advice is thus encouraged among them, which is why they let us observe their advice network in the first place.

In the investigation, 240 lay judges were interviewed using a longitudinal design with three measures, respectively in 2000, 2002, and 2005. Two types of empirical data support our illustrations and analyses. Firstly, the judges were interviewed about their advice relationships within the Court. Secondly, they were also interviewed about specific normative choices as a result of a controversy in the Court. The normative controversy among the judges was about the extent to which they should be punitive in their judicial decisions on matters of unfair competition between entrepreneurs. Being punitive meant—in French law—awarding the injured party not only “material” damages (i.e. amounts of money that make up for the actual economic losses incurred due to the unfair business practices of the offender), but also
awarding them “moral” damages (i.e. amounts of money that are meant, as a pecuniary
punishment, to teach a lesson and dissuade the offender from getting involved in such
practices again, given that such practices break the “natural” circuits of markets). Data on the
deeply rooted normative attitude (whether punitive or non punitive) of each judge in this
controversy was collected using qualitative interviews based on a vignette inspired by a real
life case. We took advantage of the fact that we were indeed able to observe ethnographically
an open controversy (not simply differences in opinion) between punitive and non punitive
judges in the court a year before wave 3 was carried out. This controversy was thus used to
test our ideas about the relationship between norms and networks. As explained below,
punitivity is a core issue in how the judges view their role and the influence of their court on
market discipline and commercial practice.

We use an actor-based stochastic network model (Snijders, 2001, 2005) to test our
hypotheses about the relative effect of status vs. normative homophily on the selection of
advisors and the relational turnover in the advice network. We first present the theoretical
background available on advice networks and collective learning, then our hypotheses about
the effect of norms on the selection of advisors. Next we describe our empirical setting and
focus on a normative choice made by the judges. Finally, we test our hypotheses using these
data. Our main result is that there is no direct effect of normative homophily on the selection
of advisors. We find that, unlike other mitigation effects, normative homophily does not
compete at all with the effect of status in this organizational context. We conclude with a
discussion on the consequences of these results for understanding collective learning through
alignment on ideas and advice coming from members with status rather than through sharing
normative attitudes.

Theoretical background

There is already a rich literature on how members of organizations select their
advisors. According to this literature, at least two kinds of processes drive these relational
choices of sources of advice: social exchange of status recognition for advice on the one hand;
and use of similarities creating homophily on the other hand. Blau’s (1955, 1964) social
exchange theory suggests that members of an organized setting exchange status recognition
for advice. Advisors are sensitive to this recognition of their status by the advice seeker and
this gives them an incentive to share their expertise or judgment with the advice seeker on an
informal basis1. Research confirms that members tend to seek advice from other members
with higher status; see for example Bapuji et al. (2004), Brass (1984), Krackhardt (1987,
1990), Barley (1990), Ibarra and Andrews (1993), Lazega and Van Duijn (1997), Rulke and
Galaskiewicz (2000), Cross et al. (2001); Mizruchi and Stearns (2001), Hansen (2002), Tsai

However, such status games can also have very negative effects on sharing knowledge
useful for task performance. Members from different ranks may find all sorts of reasons not to
communicate. Those with lower status may not want to show their superiors, who are also
among their evaluators, that they do not know. Members of higher status may not want to lose
status by seeking advice from colleagues “below them” in the formal hierarchy or in the
pecking order. Thus, status games also trigger another, parallel process in advice networks.
Lazega and Van Duijn (1997), for example, show that members are aware of such barriers and
use similarities and ties different from advice ties to mitigate the potentially negative effects
of this strong rule for intra-organizational action and learning (negative effects resulting, for

1 About the costs of acquiring and maintaining status in organizations, see Frank (1985).
example, from not being willing to show that one does not know). Members also use pre-existing ties of a different kind to manage and mitigate status games. For example, analyses of multiplexity in social exchanges in organizations suggest that co-work and friendship ties lead to the creation of advice ties (Lazega and Pattison, 1999). In some firms, advice ties are so important that they also play an important role in facilitating the flows of other kinds of resources. Thus, advice networks tend to be both hierarchical and cohesive (at least within subsets of peers), with the hierarchical dimension usually stronger than the cohesive one.

Various kinds of similarities between advice seekers and advice-givers have been identified as determinants of these homophilous and mitigating choices of exchange partners. Both ascribed, inherited or achieved characteristics can be the basis for homophilous selection. For example, working in the same office, being of the same level of seniority, and sharing the same specialty, but also the same gender and the same kind of education have been shown to facilitate advice seeking among members of organizations (McPherson et al., 2001). The use of similarities reduces transaction costs between exchange partners and this lowers the exchange rate between advice and status. If costs of advice are lower in the case of similar others, then less status is required to be given in return. This produces the empirically observable phenomenon of homophily in the selection of advisors. In effect, similarity calls for a certain solidarity between exchange partners and because of this solidarity, advice from similar others requires less in terms of giving status recognition.

To our knowledge, selection based on shared norms and values has not been examined and tested systematically in the literature. Such a connection would not be surprising from a sociological perspective. As shown by Durkheim (1922) and many successors, learning is also part of a wider socializing process. Indeed, one important factor in the exchange literature that could explain the creation and maintenance of advice networks is the norm of reciprocity as defined by classical sociologists such as Mauss (1924) and Gouldner (1960). The idea that shared norms can be a basis for selection of exchange partners, and hence of advisors, can be rooted in this insight. There is a growing body of social-psychological research on this topic (Cheshire 2007, Ekeh 1974) that would explain why individuals would give advice. More specifically, various contributions recognize norms and values, and more generally cultural background, as a source of similarities producing homophilous choices. Members tend to seek advice from others who are similar and who think like themselves because they tend to assume that people similar to themselves share some common interests, norms and values. In addition to the processes outlined above, the mechanism behind this specific mitigating effect may be that members sharing common norms and values also tend to trust each other more, thus lowering barriers raised by their organised setting. This could be especially true in controversies staging normative ambiguities and conflicts, and forcing members to take normative stands in uncertain situations. Advisors then are assumed to provide advice in order to reinforce their shared common perceptions and norms. Centola et al. (2006) divide homophily into three components: values, status and induced homophily. The first case refers to a psychological attitude that justifies opinions when shared with other people (Berelson et al. 1954). The second case relates to interactions with individuals who share the same cultural background or social status (Marsden 1988; Breiger, 2004). These two attitudes are caused by a preventive choice of the actor in selecting other actors. The third case, induced homophily, does not emerge from actors' choice, but from influence dynamics that render individuals inside a group similar in the course of time (McPherson et al. 2001). From a different perspective, based on a theory of social capital, Nahapiet and Goshal (1998) distinguish three dimensions of social capital in advice networks: a structural part (I seek advice from my boss because I am supposed to), a relational part (I seek advice from one of my colleagues because I trust him, I am friend with him, I know him), and a "cognitive" part (I seek advice from my colleague because I feel that his values/beliefs are close to mine). The latter selection effect is
specifically the kind of effect that we would like to test in this paper.

Norms and values can be used by actors to create similarities of a special kind, signal to each other these similarities, and thus mitigate the effect of status barriers. In that respect, sharing similar values with members with higher status may be a basis for selection of an advisor among many other possible advisors with higher status. But the process of exchanging appropriate knowledge with members sharing the same norms and values does not necessarily exclude or replace status games. Shared attributes and worldview may thus compete with status of the advisor as a determinant of the selection of advisors.

Such a substitution effect between status and normative choices (as explanations of dyadic advice seeking) brings to light a connection between learning and alignment on the normative values of advisors with higher status, indeed a dependence of learning on such a form of alignment. In particular, we could argue that Blau status games remain the strongest determinant in the selection of advisors regardless of normative attitude. Given that status tends to reinforce itself over time (Lazega et al., 2006), that status effect is also likely to remain stronger than any similarity effect. Status is a desired position and it is associated with power (status confers power and power confers status): therefore, those with high status have the power to reinforce their status. Thus, they may use their power to keep status more important than homophily as a precursor for advice seeking.

Hypotheses

Based on this theoretical background, we derive hypotheses concerning the selection of advisors to test in our dataset. Hypotheses 1a, 1b and 2 are meant to confirm established knowledge about status games and their mitigation based on homophily effects.

H1a. Members of an organized setting are more likely to seek advice from colleagues of higher status.

Even though Blau’s status effect is already tested in the literature, we think that it is important to underline the dynamic nature of the relation.

H1b. The status of those with highest status will tend to be reinforced over time.

Following McPherson et al (2001), the same is true for similarity effects traditionally included in explanation of selection of advisors.

H2. Members are more likely to seek advice from members with whom they share ascribed and inherited characteristics.

Having shown how various sociological and psycho-sociological theories stress the relevance of normative similarity, we expect that perceived shared values, among other characteristics, can also be the basis for homophilous mitigation of status games.

H3. Members are more likely to seek advice from members with whom they share the same values.

Finally, given that status effects and normative similarity can coexist, we also test their relative strength. Especially if a process of increasing centralization of the network takes place over time, status can be expected to be stronger than normative homophily as a
determinant of the selection of an advisor. This leads to the following statement:

H4. Over time, members are more likely to seek advice increasingly from colleagues with higher status than from colleagues with whom they share the same values.

A stronger effect for status would thus lead to look at the selection of members based on the normative values promoted by advisors with higher status as an indication of a strong connection between learning and alignment on authorities and a weaker effect of the latter’s normative choices.

Data

We test these hypotheses on a dataset collected at the Commercial Court of Paris, an institution which handles 12% of commercial litigation in France, including very complex cases. As mentioned above, its judges are not career magistrates, but rather experienced business men and women who exercise their function as lay judges mobilizing both the law and the norms of their business sector in order to find judicial solutions. An electoral body composed of sitting judges and the delegates of business sectors at the local Chamber of Commerce elects these lay judges for two- or four-year terms, for a maximum of fourteen years. Twenty generalist and specialized chambers, which treat a great variety of commercial litigation and bankruptcies, make up the Court. A formalized rotation rule requires judges to change Chambers each year. This formal obligation is meant to lower the risk of corruption or conflicts of interest.

In the domains of both litigation and bankruptcy, judges often deal with very complex legal issues in which they have a large amount of discretion. The uncertainty generated by the cases creates the need to call on numerous competencies (judicial, economic, or managerial, among others), and in fact many judges in this commercial court justify this lay institution with the argument that it brings together very diverse skills. The heterogeneity of judges, who come from multiple horizons of business, effectively creates a rich knowledge base insofar as each can draw from the others’ experiences and expertise.

At the time of the study, the lay judges represented very diverse sectors in which they either had worked or were working. Thus, in complex cases, information relating to a specific industry could be accessible to the court through judges from that field. Theoretically all sectors can present candidates to the election of lay judges on an annual basis in order to fill the vacant posts resulting from a turnover rate of 10% in the Court. Nevertheless certain sectors and/or enterprises invest more than others in “judicial entrepreneurship” and shoulder a greater share of the cost of social control of business because it is in their interest to do so. The largest is the banking/finance sector, contributing 29% of the judges in 2002. In addition, bankers often have a legal education. Among the 86 judges who responded to the survey at waves 1, 2, and 3, only 48 have formal legal education; a third of them (16 judges) are from the banking sector. Bank employees with a law degree constitute 59% of judges from the whole banking and financial business. Yet, the over-representation of finance amongst the lay judges does not represent an unchallenged dominance of that institution. In fact, a majority of judges coming from industry, construction, or other areas do not always appreciate this dominance. As stated despisingly by a banker with legal education: “shopkeepers hate bankers.”

Network data
A network dataset was collected in 2000, 2002, and 2005. Each wave used the same name generator: “Here is the list of all your colleagues at this Court, including the President and Vice-Presidents of the Court, the Presidents of Chambers, the judges, and ‘wise-men.’ I will ask you a question and you need only indicate the colleagues concerned. Using this list, please check the colleagues whom you have asked for advice during the last two years concerning a complex case, or with whom you have had basic discussions, outside formal deliberations, in order to get a different point of view on the case.” A very high response rate (87% on average for the three waves) allows for the reconstitution, at each measurement, of the complete advice network existing between the judges, whose number varied between 151 and 156 from 2000 to 2005.

Eliciting normative choices

Observing judges’ work is difficult in general: they speak little in order to preserve their independence. Furthermore, the complexity of their tasks, in the domains of litigation and bankruptcy, reflects the multiple areas of expertise called for in this type of institution. Procedures frame and define judges’ activities, but so do more or less explicit conflicts of norms. During fieldwork, we used the fact that we were able to observe ethnographically an open normative controversy between punitive and non punitive judges in the court a year before wave 3 was carried out.

The case that divided the court was LVMH vs. Morgan Stanley (January 12, 2004), a litigation case between the French luxury company and the American investment bank. In this case, the first chamber, whose President is also President of the court, condemned the bank to 30 million euros in punitive damages. Before the decision, many judges in the court were pushing for a very different solution (i.e. zero euro for punitive damages). At the time, the president of the court came from the hotel industry (i.e. was not a banker). LVMH, world leader in the luxury industry, was suing Morgan Stanley and one of its financial analysts for « biased analyses » in the evaluation of its financial health. Simultaneously, LVMH was trying to take over Gucci, another luxury firm and LVMH’s main rival, which happened to be a Morgan Stanley client. LVMH claimed that there was a conflict of interest for Morgan Stanley because of its close commercial relationship with Gucci. For LVMH, by providing the stock market with allegedly erroneous information about the finances of LVMH, Morgan Stanley was only « denigrating » the French group and its brands in order to protect its own interests as a banker and the interests of its client Gucci (which was trying to resist being taken over). According to LVMH, the « Chinese wall » that was meant to separate, within Morgan Stanley, financial analysts from investment bankers, did not work. LVMH claimed both material and moral damages up to 107 million euros. The bank defended the integrity of its analysts and put forward counter-claims for damages incurred from a « vexatious, groundless and abusive » procedure².

The punitive decision was very controversial within the court. It was present in everyone’s mind when we used the punitivity case in Box 1 to elicit normative choices (Wave 3 took place in 2005, slightly after this case). This controversy was thus used to test our ideas about the relationship between norms and networks. Indeed punitivity emerged as a core issue in how the judges view their role and the influence of the court on market discipline and commercial practice.

In order to elicit normative choices and test for the effect of normative homophily on the selection of advisors, we opted for a jurisprudential approach inciting judges to describe their criteria of judgment for specific cases. We looked at the extent to which lay judges were

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² This decision was partly confirmed by the Court of Appeal in June 2006 (http://www.avocats-publishing.com/LVMH-vs-Morgan-Stanley).
punitive or non-punitive in their assessment and awarding of damages, an area in which they have wide discretion. In order to approach the normative attitude of lay judges in this domain, we used the judgment presented in Box 1 and asked them to work on this judgment as in a jurisprudential exercise. This was a real case, judged previously in another French Commercial Court. This data was collected once, during wave 3, but we consider the normative choice made by the judges to be a choice that reflects a deeply rooted value and attitude towards punitivity, and thus to be stable over time.

**Box 1**

*With Respect to Punitivity in the Assessment of Damages in a Case of Unfair Competition*

A company whose capital is held entirely by the State (designated “Company G”), is active in the weaponry sector, particularly in combat tank construction. Company G was being sued by a competitor (designated “Company M”) on the allegation that Company G used “predatory prices” in the market for speed reducers.

Company M asked that the Court fine Company G the sum of 10,762,900 euros in damages. In addition to the subsidiary claim, they asked that an expert be appointed to calculate the loss.

Using its discretionary authority, the Court did not call in an expert to evaluate the loss.

After an examination of the profit rate and the basis for the turnover maintained by the plaintiff, as well as an analysis of moral and material damages and the loss of competitive capacity, the Court evaluated the loss as equal to less than 3% of the sum initially asked for.

Similarly, on the subject of profit rate the Court declared that “in heavy industries, where competition is fierce, producers apply a profit margin of 10-20% to the production costs of the materials they order,” [but] declare a rate of 10%.

Concerning the basis for the turnover, the Court stated that Company M did not provide proof of its allegations, and considerably exaggerated the alleged loss.

In the end, the Court declared the absence of all moral damage and material loss, notably reasoning that “the risks of litigation are inherent to business and may always arise during the life of a company.”

This case calls for the evaluation of both “material” and “moral” damages, and it raises the question of calling in an expert. Judges were asked to read this judgment and to comment on it, then to respond to the following question: “Do you support the recognition of a moral prejudice of a moral person (yes or no)? Why? If you are, what rules do you use to evaluate this moral prejudice?” The judge’s decision in this case is based on Article 420-1 (French Code of Commerce), and more precisely on its paragraph 32 on predatory pricing, i.e. when “a product’s unit selling price is less than its variable unit cost.”

As in the jurisprudential literature, we use the assessment of “moral” damages as an indicator of punitivity, a normative choice made by the judges. We measure the degree of punitivity of judges by asking them whether they recognize, when asked, the right for a

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3 In French company law the term “moral person” refers to any formal organization.
corporate entity to claim moral damages. Judges do not all think in the same way when it comes to such moral damages because they do not all proceed in the same way in assessing loss and restitution. A majority of judges (63%) identify themselves as generally punitive and favorable to the recognition of moral damages for corporate entities insofar as substantive law allows for this recognition on condition that the existence of such damages be proved (Article 1382 of French Civil Code). Their main idea is that the individual loss suffered in the test case goes hand in hand with collective damage to the whole sector because it implies the destruction of “natural” market circuits. Hence it conflicts with the pro free-market point of view of the majority of judges at the Court. In qualitative interviews, the question is then reframed in terms of the responsibility of businessmen: if blame and punishment are not present, there is a strong risk of deresponsibilization of commercial practices, according to punitive judges. Moral damages are part of the harsh business world, and it is important to recognize them even if it is often necessary to give up on compensating for them because of lack of proof and the difficulty of assessing them. These judges sometimes also see the recognition of moral damages as a compensatory element when they feel material damages have been undervalued. This can be the case, for example, when a businessman’s reputation or brand is harmed. As in the example of counterfeiting, it is difficult to quantify such a grievance. Punitive judges think that they should uphold such claims precisely because they are difficult to quantify and prove.

A minority of judges, however, reject punitive decisions. They think that moral damage does not exist per se for companies, and that punitivity brings in a penal and criminal dimension that should not be part of their work in a civil law courthouse. Such non-punitive judges say that they do not use their discretion to uphold such claims. The non-punitive approach is often popular in business because it suits the more general ideology of these lay judges about the necessity of maintaining a working relationship between the offender and his victim, of re-establishing a link and renegotiating contracts after the trial. Indeed many lay judges like to claim that they are mediators who feel close to the litigating parties—who all belong to the same business community.

A distinct tendency emerges from this analysis: the judges who have the least seniority in the Court are more favorable to the recognition of moral (i.e. punitive) damages for corporate entities than more senior judges. These “junior judges” argue that, in their daily work, they experience a business world that has become anomie; whereas more senior judges attribute this tendency of junior colleagues to be more punitive to their tendency to think of themselves as “righters of wrongs” as opposed to followers of the Rule of Law. Another tendency also becomes clear from the analysis of responses: bankers with a law degree have a strong tendency to be non-punitive (concurring with the decision presented in the test case). This may be in part because they felt less concerned by the case presented in the vignette which is about non-banking industries; in part because the question of punitivity reminded them of the LVMH vs. Morgan Stanley case, where they presumably sided with MS; or in part because bankers are often less directly concerned with what goes on in real, industrial markets (as opposed to financial markets and company boards).

Finally, although a majority of judges call themselves, in theory, rather punitive, 88% of them would not grant moral damages in this particular case. Several factors may contribute to explaining this paradox: the fact that judges do not have access to the complete dossier at the time of the interview; the fact that the Court did not itself grant moral damages in the sample case; but also the fact that the influence of norms on behavior cannot be conceived of as direct. This influence might rather be mediated by the relationship between the norm and the evolution of the social structure that we are going to examine. This mediation is illustrated in this particular case by the fact that all the magistrates who had studied law and who came from the banking and finance industry (banker-lawyers) considered that there was no moral
damage in this case. The banker-lawyers – whose influence within the Court was mentioned above – are then, based on this information, less punitive than the non banker-lawyers.

This conflict between judges, based on deeply rooted differences in attitudes and norms regarding punitivity, fuelled an open controversy within the court after the LVMH vs. Morgan Stanley case. In this situation, adherence to a norm by a sub-group of judges may constitute a driving force for the evolution of the advice network as a whole. Exploring this issue requires introducing such normative choices as an independent variable in the model testing our hypotheses.

Model for analysis

The dependent variable in our study is the selection of advice ties by the judges, and we focus on the evolution over time of the network composed by these ties. For the analysis we use the stochastic actor-based model of Snijders (2001), explained in Snijders, Steglich and van de Bunt (forthcoming). The analysis was carried out using Siena version 3.1 (Snijders et al., 2008). This model allows to express the effect of the existing network structure on the changes in selection of advisors, and to take into consideration and study the interdependence between ties. For the model specification, it is required to specify the endogenous, i.e. network-dependent effects that are hypothesized to drive the network evolution, together with the hypothesized effects of exogenous variables, i.e., attributes of actors or pairs of actors that are determined outside of the network.

Variables

We specify the model by listing the so-called effects, which are the explanatory variables for network change (for more detailed descriptions of these see Snijders, van de Bunt, Steglich, forthcoming). The model assumes that probabilities of tie changes by actors depend on these effects, as calculated from the network that would be obtained after making this change.

A first set of explanatory variables are endogenous effects that are likely to drive the evolution of the network. They are meant to account for path-dependency in network evolution. Among the most relevant endogenous effects are reciprocity, transitive triplets, and the possibility of 3-cycles of generalized exchange. Reciprocity captures the tendency to seek advice from one’s advisor, and depends on the number of mutual ties of each given actor i; the transitive triplets effect refers to the propensity to seek advice from one’s advisor’s advisor, and is defined by the number of transitive patterns in actor i’s relations, i.e. ordered pairs of actors (j, h) to both of whom i is tied, while j is also tied to h. The tendency for generalized exchange to occur is captured by the number of 3-cycles in i’s personal advice relationships, i.e. cycles in which i seeks advice from j, j from k and k from i. A local hierarchy in advice is represented by a positive transitivity and/or a negative 3-cycles effect.

To represent the global dimension of hierarchy and status, we also take into account the distribution of actors’ in-degrees and out-degrees which measure, respectively, the number of choices received and sent out by each of them, and thus constitute centrality indicators. This distribution is very uneven; in particular as far as in-degrees are concerned, a large majority of judges receive only a few choices and have very low degree centrality, while a small core of very central judges have extremely high degrees. The in-degrees of the 86 judges who responded to the survey at waves 1, 2, and 3 vary between 0 and 28 for the first
wave, between 0 and 40 for the second wave, and between 0 and 32 for the third wave. Their out-degrees vary between 0 and 16 for the first wave, between 0 and 23 for the second wave, and between 0 and 27 for the third wave. Not only is the gap between minimum and maximum value large, but the skewed distribution is also striking: at each of the three waves, a large majority of individuals have very low in-degree (0-2), while the number of judges with in-degrees of 20 or more is 1, 3, and 6, respectively, at each of the three waves. Regarding out-degrees, the skewness is less strong but still remarkable: the number of judges with out-degrees of 15 or more is, respectively, 1, 5, and 7. These actors are likely to exert a strong impact on the evolution of the network and consequently, on estimation results.

To control for the effects of in-degrees and out-degrees, we use a set of endogenous variables. First, in-degree popularity (sqrt) is defined as the sum of the square roots of in-degrees of a judge’s advisors. If positive, it indicates that judges with higher in-degree are more attractive as advisors, and indicates a self-reinforcing effect of (in-degree-centrality-based) status that leads to a relatively high dispersion of the in-degrees. Taking the sum of the square roots of in-degrees instead of just the sum of in-degrees corresponds to an assumption that differences between high in-degrees are relatively less strong than the same differences between low in-degrees. Second, out-degree popularity (sqrt) is defined as the sum of the square roots of out-degrees of an actor’s advisors. If positive, it indicates that judges with higher out-degree are more attractive for others as advisors. A positive out-degree popularity effect will increase the association between in-degrees and out-degrees. Again, the use of a square root measure presumes that differences between high out-degrees are relatively less important than the same differences between low out-degrees. Third, out-degree activity (sqrt) is defined as the outdegree of an actor times the square root of his/her out-degree. It is, again, a self-reinforcing effect: a positive parameter will lead to increased dispersion of outdegrees. Fourth, in-in degree (sqrt) assortativity represents the differential tendency for actors with high in-degrees to be tied to other actors who likewise have high in-degrees.

It may also be necessary to control explicitly for the individuals with the highest in-degrees – henceforth called “super-central advisors”. In doing so, it is useful to take into account the strong correlation that exists between outlying in-degrees and certain important formal roles at the Court, and to look at the extent to which key positions at the top of the institutional hierarchy explain the extremely high number of requests for advice that these individuals receive, and that are not explained by other covariates. For this purpose, one version of our model (Model 1 below) includes a dummy variable that controls for the effect of those judges who, because of their formal roles, are very much sought out as advisors by other judges. More precisely, the category of super-central advisors includes five individuals, who 1) hold special responsibilities at the Court, and 2) have above-average in-degrees at each observation of the network, with the in-degree exceeding the average plus 3 times the standard error at least once. As indicated in the Siena manual (pp. 50-51), we have given to these covariates an alter effect, representing the reinforcement over time of the high in-degrees of these actors (such that a positive parameter would indicate that the in-degrees of actors with higher values on this covariate increase more rapidly).

Heterogeneities among individual out-degrees, i.e. differences in the number of requests for advice that actors send out, may also need to be taken into account, because outliers in out-degrees could have an undue influence on parameter estimations. However, it is preferable not to use dummy variables in this case, because such heterogeneities exhibit hardly any correlation with the formal hierarchy of the Court or with other possible explanatory factors. They may in part be interpretable as idiosyncratic response tendencies, i.e., individual differences in interpretations of the advice question. Thus, to minimize the impact of extremely active individuals on the parameter estimates in the network evolution, one version of our model (Model 1) uses structurally determined values in the digraph, i.e.
values that are regarded as deterministic rather than random. As the Siena manual makes clear, this is in principle analogous to “structural zeros” in contingency tables, although Siena allows not only structural zeros but also structural ones. A structural zero means that it is certain that there is no tie from actor $i$ to actor $j$; a structural one means that it is certain that there is a tie (p. 13)

A second set of explanatory variables are exogenous effects. To begin with, we complete our study of status (which already includes an endogenous component at both local and global level) with its formal dimension, that is, by taking into account official roles and responsibilities within the Court. Specifically, we introduce dummy variables to distinguish Presidents of Chambers and Presidents Rattachés from other judges. These are formal roles that reflect hierarchy and strongly depend on judges’ seniority (in terms of tenure in the organization). Judges can become Presidents of Chambers after serving in the institution for at least 8 years. Those who were Presidents of Chamber in the past, and are still in the Court, are Presidents Rattachés – a category which also includes advisors to the President of the Court. More junior judges have the right to chair Chamber sessions if they have already served in the Court for about 5-7 years and are likely to become future Presidents of Chambers. Thus, status strongly depends on the number of years spent in the institution, with a threshold at about the eighth year. We have conceptualized Presidents of Chambers and Presidents Rattachés as changing explanatory variables, in order to take into account changes in status that may have occurred between the first and the second periods of observation (resp. 2000-2002 and 2002-2005). To look at the extent to which the relational behavior of Presidents and Presidents Rattachés differs from that of other judges, we estimate both ego effects to account for their advice-seeking behavior, and alter effects for their advice-giving behavior. A positive ego parameter would indicate that these officials have a greater tendency to seek advice than others; a positive alter parameter would indicate that others have a greater tendency to seek advice from these officials.

In addition to this series of explanatory variables effects covering the relevant dimensions of status in this court, we introduce two more sets of exogenous variables in line with our research questions. A third set includes actors’ attributes identifying sub-groups and similarities on which homophilous choices of advisors are likely to be based within the organization. Classification in sub-groups mainly depends on the sectors of professional activity from which members of the Court originate, with a strong dividing line between judges coming from the banking and finance industries and judges from the non-financial sector. This distinction can be combined with differences in specialization of judges, particularly the distinction between those who have a legal education and those who do not. The banking and finance sector traditionally provides the Court with many more judges with expertise in legal matters, relative to other sectors. To check for homophily, we not only estimate ego and alter effects for these attributes, but also similarity effects. The alter effect is meant to check whether bankers-lawyers tend to be more selected as advisors than others; the ego effect is used to look at the tendency of bankers-lawyers to ask more advice than others; and finally, the similarity effect aims to establish the extent to which bankers-lawyers tend to select as advisors those among them who also are bankers-lawyers.

Chamber co-membership is also introduced as a control similarity variable. It reflects the division of work and functional interdependencies in the organization which may also be mobilized systematically to make homophilous choices of advisors, because it is less costly in terms of time and energy to seek advice from members of one’s own chamber. Two judges who are in the same Chamber have closer or more frequent contacts. We have introduced Chamber co-membership as a changing independent variable in order to keep track of any changes between the first and the second periods of observation (resp. 2000-2002 and 2002-2005). More specifically, Chamber co-membership is a dyadic covariate, i.e. referring to two
actors at the same time. During the first period, it is 1 if two judges have been in the same Chamber at least once between 1992 and 2002, 0 otherwise; during the second period, it is 1 if there has been at least one Chamber co-membership between 1992 and 2005, 0 otherwise.

We also control for homophily effects that may arise from employment status (whether judges are active or retired, which is a meaningful divide in this organization where judges with a job to perform outside the court value rapidity and reliance on experts much more than judges who are retired from their business). This is a changing independent variable allowing control for changes in employment status between the first and the second periods of observation. Other possible homophily effects that we control for are related to judges’ education and consist in being alumni of prestigious, elite schools or of business schools. We estimate similarity effects for these variables, where a positive parameter would imply that actors prefer ties to others with similar values on this variable. Similarity variables are derived from individual covariates, and the mean value of all similarity variables is reported in the Siena output.

A fourth set brings in measures of judges’ normative orientations, aiming to capture their acceptance of particular norms. As outlined in the previous section, we operationalize normative orientations using a non-changing, dummy variable indicating their punitive or non-punitive attitude toward a company accused of unfair competition (in this case: price dumping) because it is a good indicator of their view of the “free market” mechanism and consequently, of the possible role of regulators. For this variable, we estimate ego, alter, and similarity effects.

The data file we use includes the 86 judges who responded at each of the three waves of 2000, 2002, and 2005. The main reasons for disregarding the few missing data and, more notably, the changing composition of the Court (with individuals that join and leave every year owing to the yearly election of new members, the fixed term mandate, etc.) are that these judges provide most information about the changes in the advice ties, and a considerable reduction of time necessary for estimations. In many respects, the set of 86 actors for whom data are complete does not significantly differ from the larger set of actors that would be obtained by including all judges that have been present at the Court at least once in 2000, 2002 or 2005. The distribution of in-degrees and out-degrees, the minima, maxima, and means of covariates, and the similarity scores for covariates are similar for the two sets. The set of 86 actors for whom data are complete can thus be regarded as sufficiently representative of the characteristics of the network that needs to be investigated. In estimations including judges who joined or left the Court between the first and last wave of data collection, we obtained roughly similar results.

Of these 86 judges, 27 come from the banking and financial sector, and 16 of them have legal education. The other 59 judges are from the non-financial sector, with the following breakdown: 15 are from Industry, 16 from Trade, 11 from Building and Public Works, and 17 from Services. Regarding employment status, 52 judges were active in period 2000-2002, while only 39 were active in 2002-2005; from the first to the second period, 18 judges switched from activity to inactivity, while only 5 did the opposite. On punitivity, it appears that 54 of these 86 judges, i.e. 63% of them are punitive. Punitivity is also widespread among individuals with high formal status: among the 21 judges who were Presidents of Chambers or Presidents Rattachés during the period 2000-2002, 15 are punitive; among the 42 judges who were Presidents of Chambers or Presidents Rattachés in 2002-2005, 26 are punitive. However, the normative choices of the five individuals with highest in-degree-centrality (the ‘super-central’ advisors) differ: indeed, only one of them is punitive.

Results
To test our hypotheses, we estimated two models using *Siena*, with the advice ties as dependent variables (Table 1). Our focus on status-related issues follows from the fact that in modeling this data set we first focus on the endogenous network effects – which is where the difficulties are. The analysis does show that in-degrees and out-degrees are of great importance to understand the network dynamics, which points to status-related arguments. The first model, "With super-central judges" gives results for a model that includes a dummy variable to control for super-central advisors who have outlying in-degrees, and uses structural zeros and ones to neutralize the potential effect of individuals with outlying out-degrees, as indicated above. The second model, "Without super-central judges" gives the same model but estimated for the data set where all ties are the same but no ties are structurally fixed, and no dummy to control for super-central advisors is included.

**Table 1: Two Siena models**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate parameters</th>
<th>Model 1 (with controls for super-central judges)</th>
<th>Model 2 (without controls for super-central judges)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate parameter period 1</td>
<td>6.01 (0.43)</td>
<td>9.54 (0.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate parameter period 2</td>
<td>7.09 (0.33)</td>
<td>9.35 (0.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation function parameters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>-4.03 (0.61)</td>
<td>-4.26 (0.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>1.94 (0.43)</td>
<td>1.73 (0.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitive triplets</td>
<td>-0.12 (0.06)</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-cycles</td>
<td>-0.15 (0.25)</td>
<td>0.13 (0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-degree popularity (sqrt)</td>
<td>-0.75 (0.32)</td>
<td>-0.23 (0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-degree popularity (sqrt)</td>
<td>-1.72 (0.43)</td>
<td>-1.26 (0.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-degree activity (sqrt)</td>
<td>1.33 (0.23)</td>
<td>0.85 (0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-in degree (sqrt) sortativity</td>
<td>0.64 (0.18)</td>
<td>0.51 (0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super-central advisors alter</td>
<td>3.84 (1.20)</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President of Chamber alter</td>
<td>0.04 (0.21)</td>
<td>0.09 (0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President of Chamber ego</td>
<td>-1.69 (0.46)</td>
<td>-1.42 (0.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Rattaché alter</td>
<td>-0.26 (0.26)</td>
<td>-0.15 (0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Rattaché ego</td>
<td>-1.84 (0.46)</td>
<td>-1.50 (0.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber (centered)</td>
<td>1.21 (0.13)</td>
<td>1.01 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banker-Lawyer alter</td>
<td>0.02 (0.22)</td>
<td>0.10 (0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banker-Lawyer ego</td>
<td>-0.97 (0.38)</td>
<td>-0.85 (0.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banker-Lawyer similarity</td>
<td>0.15 (0.14)</td>
<td>0.07 (0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business School similarity</td>
<td>-0.39 (0.19)</td>
<td>-0.47 (0.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite School similarity</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.18)</td>
<td>-0.32 (0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment similarity</td>
<td>0.29 (0.10)</td>
<td>0.23 (0.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive alter</td>
<td>0.35 (0.21)</td>
<td>-0.43 (0.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive ego</td>
<td>0.96 (0.32)</td>
<td>0.70 (0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive similarity</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let us comment on our results, starting from effects common to both models. The rate parameter accounts for the amount of change between two subsequent observations of the network, i.e. the speed at which the dependent variable (the network) changes. It is calculated separately for each of the two periods, namely 2000-2002 and 2002-2005. All other parameters are coefficients of the objective function or network evaluation function, which can be regarded as an indicator of the attractiveness of the network for a given actor, and is used to compare different states of the network when the actor makes a choice to maintain present ties, to add a new tie, or to delete an existing tie. The higher a parameter value, the stronger the impact of the associated effect on actor choice -and consequently, the more
important its bearing on network evolution over time.

Some of these parameters refer to endogenous structural effects, which are included to identify the general properties of this network. The density effect is a basic indicator of network structure, measuring the average number of outgoing ties and its evolution over time, and can be interpreted as an intercept. Then, the reciprocity effect is positive and significant, and can be regarded as a tendency of judges to seek advice from those who themselves sought advice from them. The other endogenous effects account for status and show that there is a status hierarchy in this network, and this hierarchy is entirely global and not local. 3-cycles effects which can be taken to express local hierarchy are not significant in any of the two models, and transitivity is barely significant only in one of them. What seems to matter most are degree-related effects which represent global hierarchy, namely in-degree popularity, out-degree popularity, out-degree activity, and in-in-degree assortativity. Most of them confirm the presence of a status hierarchy. Outdegree - popularity (sqrt) is negative in both models, which suggests that those who seek a lot of advice, receive few questions from others, or a decreasing number over time. Thus, the in-degrees of judges with high out-degrees will increase less than the in-degrees of judges with low out-degrees. Outdegree - activity (sqrt) is consistently strongly positive. This is a self-reinforcing effect that also confirms a status hierarchy: those who seek a lot of advice remain in this role, so that the dispersion of out-degrees remains high, or increases over time. The positive in-in degree (sqrt) assortativity represents the differential tendency for actors with high in-degrees to be tied to other actors who likewise have high in-degrees, and is also in line with a status effect. Instead, the in-degree - popularity (sqrt) effect is negative in model 1, and non-significant in model 2, suggesting that those judges who already receive a lot of advice questions (high in-degrees) do not necessarily receive increasingly more questions, so that the dispersion of in-degrees does not increase over time. The fact that this effect is significantly negative only in the model that controls for super-central individuals indicates a self-equalizing effect of status, which holds only among non-super-central-judges. To synthesize, there is a strong status effect: those who ask a lot are lower-status judges, not part of the elite of the courthouse, who tend to remain in this role over time. It is the opposite for judges with high in-degrees, whose high centrality is sustained or increased over time and who have a tendency to seek advice especially from others with high in-degree. The two processes coexist. These results may apply to other advice networks in which degree differences are important.

Regarding formally-induced status, it can be observed that the ego effects are negative for Presidents of Chambers and Presidents Rattachés, indicating that these individuals, who hold important formal positions in the hierarchy of the Court, consult less and less the others, so that their out-degree centrality decreases over time. Instead, alter effects are not significant in either model. This suggests that the formal hierarchy of this institution contributes to exerting an impact on the evolution of the advice network, at least in part.

The model also controls for Chamber co-membership and other homophily effects; in particular, it controls for the specificities of professional groups, distinguishing in particular bankers-lawyers from other judges. The positive Chamber parameter indicates that the tendency of judges to consult present or former Chamber co-members is one of the drivers of the evolution of the advice network. The negative Banker-lawyer ego parameter shows that

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4 It may be noted that transitivity is positive and significant in models that do not include the degree-related effects, but this represents a tendency toward network closure that is “explained away” completely by the degree-related effects.

5 Note that the very coexistence of the two processes provides support to the spinning-top metaphor used to account for the dynamics of advice networks (Lazega, Lemercier, Mounier, 2006) if one thinks of the body of the spinning top as flexible: judges in the shaft tend to become increasingly central, but the energy created by the rotation of judges across chambers must go somewhere: it does not only stabilize the shaft, it also tends to flatten the body of the top itself.
judges from the banking sector and with legal background consult less and less the others, so that their out-degree centrality decreases over time, but the alter effect is not significant, meaning that bankers-lawyers are not particularly attractive as advisors. Finally, the professional group homophily (similarity) effect is not significant. Having been in a business school gives rise to a negative similarity effect, while having attended a elite school is barely significant in one model only, and a positive similarity effect results from employment status.

Regarding punitivity, three different effects are meant to capture the extent to which judges’ choices of advisors reflect the fact that a majority of them self-identified as punitive: an alter effect, to check whether punitive judges tend to be more selected as advisors than others; an ego effect, to look at the tendency of punitive judges to ask more or less advice than others; and finally, a similarity effect, to establish the extent to which punitive judges tend to select as advisors those among them who also have a punitive attitude. These effects are confronted to the attractiveness of high-status judges as advisors, to assess the relative impact and importance of, respectively, adherence to norms and the formal hierarchy of the institution, in driving the dynamics of this network. The alter parameter is negative and significant only in one model, thus indicating that judges, though mostly punitive, cannot be said to be generally attracted towards punitive advisors. The punitive ego effect is positive, which implies that punitive judges tend to seek increasingly more advice than others. The similarity effect is not significant, thus suggesting that similarity of normative attitudes does not constitute a primary force driving the evolution of this network: punitive judges do not have a strong preference for advisors that share their punitive attitude, and conversely, non-punitive judges do not necessarily seek advice from non-punitive colleagues.

This focus on endogenous effects provides support for the “status and norm” story. What we see in our analyses is that the mitigation effect holds for chamber similarity and employment status similarity, but not for normative homophily. In terms of our hypotheses, H1a and H1b are confirmed: members of an organized setting are more likely to seek advice from colleagues of higher status, and the status of those with highest status will tend to be reinforced over time. H2 is only partly confirmed: it is confirmed for indegrees (if indegrees may be regarded as a particular type of ascribed characteristic); but it cannot be said that members are more likely to seek advice from members with whom they share any ascribed and inherited characteristics; instead only some common characteristics can help mitigate Blau’s rule of status. In particular, H3 is not confirmed: members are not more likely to seek advice from members with whom they share the same values. Normative homophily is not strong enough to serve as a basis for mitigation of status games. This result is strengthened by the fact that H4 is confirmed: over time, members are more likely to seek advice increasingly from colleagues with higher status than from colleagues with whom they share the same values.

These results may be interpreted in two different ways. Either shared norms do not have a "pure" mitigating effect on choices of advisors; or when there is a normative struggle at the top of this kind of organization, normative mitigation of the costs associated with choosing advisors is weakened, and normative choices become an additional signal of alignment, of taking a stand in a controversy, not a mitigation device. In this situation, we have a normative radicalization/politicization of issues at the top of the top with a very small number of elite advisors. This sidelines the mitigation effect. Norms and value judgments in a strongly hierarchical and conflictual network do not help mitigate; rather their expression becomes a form of alignment and participation in the struggle.

**Conclusion and discussion**

The selection of advisors in organizations is important because it has an effect on
collective learning, an important process in the knowledge economy. In this study, we confirm previous work showing that advice seeking converges towards senior and recognized members with status. Status effects are complex: there is a status equalizing process among actors who are not super-central advisors; but there is a status accumulation process among super-central advisors who become increasingly central over time and who seek each other for advice. We also confirm that members use certain similarities (chamber co-membership, employment status) with *alters* in order to mitigate the strong status rule. We look for a specific form of normative homophily but find that, over time, similarities in terms of normative choices do not have a direct effect on the selection of advisors. In our case study, advice seeking does converge towards central and super-central members and reflects a process of cognitive alignment on such members who gained the ‘authority to know’, who provide social approval for specific decisions.

These findings suggest that this alignment is a key ingredient of intra-organizational learning, but we do not find a mitigating effect of norms on status games. The status hierarchy remains the social incentive for actors to share their knowledge and experience with others, thus helping in explaining the social organization of the learning process. This contradicts sociological theories that expect a “pure” effect of norms on behavior, independent of status effects. In our specific dataset, central actors are mostly punitive and super-central ones usually non punitive. Learning in such a context seems to depend more on conformity via progressive alignment on the norm promoted by the elite, than on the perception of shared norms and values per se.

These findings also raise questions about the issue of the impact of controversies and the adherence to norms on the dynamics of advice networks. As far as our case study is concerned, norms do not, on their own, drive the evolution of the advice network of the organization. This effect is likely to be less mechanical and more complex than the sociological tradition would suggest. *Alter* is not selected as an exchange partner solely because one thinks him/her inclined to share the same values and norms. At least in professional environments, if we look for a separate effect of values on relational choice, this effect has every chance of proving nonexistent. The actors may only take norms and values into account through the negotiation of the terms of the exchanges in which they engage with partners already positioned within structure and power relationships. Actors endogenize the structure at the moment of selecting exchange partners and of referring to a principle guiding their decisions. Our results suggest that future research in this area should look for a closer link between norms and social ties in their co-evolution. Norms, behaviors, and structures should evolve together, and it is ultimately through the formalized study of this co-evolution in greatly varied controversies that a more sophisticated theory of individual and collective action will be built.