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Institutionalising emotions: Crafting pride as an institution to promote organisational change

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Introduction.

Research on emotions in organisations has a long history, full of continuities and discontinuities. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a focus on factory workers' subjective feelings existed already in the industrial psychology literature. For instance, it aimed at understanding the effects of felt monotony of everyday work or fatigue on the performance of workers (Münsterberg, 1913). However, in the management literature that existed, the fact that these were subjective feelings did not match the scientific legitimacy standards of scientific management, and the study of these subjective aspects of organisational life was left to the medical and then psychoanalytical as well as psychological literature (Weiss & Brief, 2001). After World War II, the modifications in the job market and the capitalist environment, and the advances in the work of psychologists on subjective feelings and especially subjective motivation, together helped reconcile the study of what are akin to nowadays emotions and managerial literature. There is a striking continuity: as in the early factory-located research on monotony or fatigue, the study of employees' motivations, drives and feelings in the workplace aimed at justify worker selection and job adaptations, referred in the literature as “*job enlargement*” (Reif & Schoderbek, 1966) or “*job enrichment*” (Chung & Ross, 1977). The following development of a managerial rhetoric of organisational culture (Barley & Kunda, 1992), contemporary of the emergence of the sociology of emotions, is a discontinuity in the paradigm within which emotions can be studied, but has been another way to justify work adaptations and change, culminating into nowadays' rhetoric of empowerment (Ivanova & von Scheve, 2020). That is to say, emotions, or feelings have a long instrumental history within management.

In our contemporary environment, change, of work, of organisational forms, has become the norm, and organisations are seen as an ongoing process or reordering and becoming (Chia, 1995). As such, the emotional life of organisations is becoming crucial to manage, and has also known a real upsurge of interest from the academic community, with some exceptional progress that have been made since the 1990s (Fineman, 1993). Especially, organisational change, as a process that is notably highly emotional (Antonacopoulou & Gabriel, 2001), will be our point of interest in our paper. Whether they are studied from a positive psychological focus or a sociological one, emotions in these processes are often depicted as being an important fuel for conducting change process, but also as a powerful resource managers or other change actions can use to justify their actions. It is especially well studied within the institutional literature that has recently incorporated emotions as an important area of study (Lok, Creed, DeJordy & Voronov, 2017). We aim to contribute to this literature with an empirical case that created for us a mystery (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). According to the literature, emotions are a fuel or a tool. However, we witnessed, during a field study in an organisation undergoing a process of change, that a specific emotion, pride, was included in the objectives of the organisation change. Investigating more on pride in this organisation, we found that its experience by employees was rooted in a way of accomplishing their everyday work that will soon not be possible anymore, since change would profoundly modify the relationships between employees and between employees and their everyday practices, and by this way disrupting even what could elicit pride. It is strange for the organisation, therefore, to promote an emotion and to use it to engage employees in change, if the same emotion is endangered by the same change.

Given this, we ask the following research questions: how can change actors make up for the loss of the possibility of experiencing a certain emotion, constitutive of an old way of working that has to be disrupted by the change promoted by the same change actors? How can we account, then, for the construction of a context-specific emotion?

Our aim in this paper is to contribute to the study of emotions within organisational change, more precisely under an emotionalised institutional logics framework (Friedland, 2018). To do so, we will review key insights of the theories of emotions during organisational change and introduce a more precise way to define emotions, building on philosopher Jesse Prinz' work on emotions (2004, 2009). We will apply our framework on our empirical material, emerging from an empirical research we conducted between 2018 and 2019, to solve our

mystery and account for the construction and institutionalisation of an emotion during an episode of organisational change.

Going the right way – managing emotions during change.

A first strand of literature we review is interested in the way managers or change agents can manage emotions during change, assuming that during an episode of change, positive and negative emotions can be found within employees (Kiefer, 2002) and that these emotional reactions of change recipients are to a large extent correlated with achieving a successful change (Oreg, Vakola & Armenakis, 2011). Much of this literature relies on an appraisal theory of emotions (Scarantino, 2016), and the work of psychologists representative of this theory constituting the theoretical base of these papers (Lazarus, 1991, 2001; Scherer, 2005). The unitary model for a single change event is that individuals pass through two main phases of appraisal when perceiving this change event. These appraisals govern the inclination of the individual to engage in change and the way she or he will engage in it (Huy, 1999).

As such, positive emotions resulting from positive appraisals are outlined as encouraging employee involvement in change (Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolf & DePalma, 2006). Contrary to positive emotions, numerous researches have underlined that negative emotions are catalysers of negative outcomes for the organisations, such as disengagement and increase of sick leaves (Fugate, Kinicki & Prussia, 2008), conflict because negative emotions generally derive from a perception that contradicts one's goals (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001), and overall a decrease in employee well-being (Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017). For such reasons, a large amount of literature encourages managers and other change actors to pay a careful attention to the way information about change they communicate is framed, notably in the justification of the rationale for change, in order to elicit positive appraisals and emotions and build trust in the way change is envisaged and conducted (Liu & Perrewé, 2005; Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia & Irmer, 2007; Smollan, 2013).

This model generalises to organisational change conceived as a process composed of an accumulation of discrete change events. Globally, organisational change is often described as generative of anxiety, stress and fear coming from the uncertainty of the outcomes of change (Fineman, 2006; Smollan, 2015), and the accretion of change events is related to an accretion of negative emotions from change recipients (Kiefer, 2005; Klarner, By & Diefenbach, 2011). Hence, there is a need for managers to carefully consider the emotional balance of employees

(Huy, 2002). To engage in positive appraisals of the accumulating change events, individuals draw upon their psychological capital, which permits the engagement in positive appraisals, a capital that is said to diminish along the ongoing change process (Helpap & Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, 2016). To foster positive emotions, the academic literature emphasizes the way organisations can rely on individuals that possess sufficient psychological capital, for example resilience (Shin, Taylor & Seo, 2012) to stay positive and diffuse positive emotions to the others (Avey, Wernsing & Luthans, 2008). The collective expression of emotions, positive or negative, is crucial in order to create an organisational framework of interpretation of change events that can help create a positive affective relationship between employees and change (Barner, 2008, Bartunek, Balogun & Do, 2011; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Steigenberger, 2015).

From direction to action – emotions as tool or fuel.

This insightful literature has nonetheless to be refined, since it concentrates on a deterministic depiction of emotion management during a change process. We know that organisations are also infused with an organisational culture and a certain number of subcultures that, on the one hand, can enable or not the expression of certain emotions (Coupland, Brown, Daniels & Humphreys, 2008), and on the other hand, constrain the way individuals ascribe and create meaning to the ongoing change (Smollan & Sayers, 2009). In other words, the judgments or appraisals individuals make and consequently their emotional experiences of change is structured by beliefs, culture, and other pre-existing meaning structures that differ from one another, and call for a finer comprehension (Huy, Corley & Kraatz, 2014). From this assumption, we propose to turn on a literature that helps understanding the structures within which the emotional aspect of organisational life is embedded.

Closely related to culture, institutions, among other definitions, are envisaged as shared systems of meaning, historically situated and socially constructed, constituted of discourses, and defining the taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs and material practices in a certain social context (Zilber, 2008; Hatch & Zilber, 2012). Organisational life is then organised by institutional arrangements prescribing individuals' and collectives' interpretations of the world and behaviours, enabling us to get a closer look at the role and importance of emotions at the organisational and individual levels (Lok et al., 2017). On the contrary of the previous literature that is grounded in a psychological, cognitivist view of emotions, accounts of emotional processes in an institutional theoretical framework are grounded in a symbolic

interactionist and sociological view of emotions (Shott, 1979; Bericat, 2006) where emotions are social phenomena embedded in these institutional arrangements that provide meaning to their experience and expression and on the other hand restrain these very same experience and expression through the systems of norms, symbols, beliefs and values that constitute feeling rules (Hochschild, 1979).

Organisational change in institutional theorising has primarily been conceived as a product of an exogenous shift at the societal level, for instance a technological disruption (Greenwood & Hinings, 2006), before scholars gained interest in changes resulting from endogenous forces, actors in the organisation that collectively act for institutional change and rearrangement (Seo & Creed, 2002). Emotional processes play a major role in the way actors can engage in institutional change process or resist it. Institutions provide “*templates for action, cognition, and emotion*” (Lawrence, Suddaby & Leca, 2011: 53), are plural within an organisation and actors evolving in this organisation sometimes face institutional contradictions. The experience of institutional contradiction is indeed a highly emotional one, just as organisational change has been often cited to be, and actors embedded in this contradiction have been showed drawing upon emotions to resolve it and engage in institutional processes that bring about change (Creed, DeJordy & Lok, 2010).

Therefore, scholars in institutional theory have taken a rising interest in studying the role of emotions in such institutional processes of change, or maintenance, that is in studying how the direction of the reordering of ways to think and act constitutive of organisational change (Doolin, 2003) is created and controlled live. For this matter, emotions are first powerful tools that can be used as rhetorical device to make people engage in these processes (Brown, Ainsworth & Grant, 2012; Goodrick, Jarvis & Reay, 2020). But, as far as overcoming resistance is concerned, emotions, especially negative ones, are also used as tools by powerful actors to refrain other actors in their temptation to go another way, that is to disrupt some preferred institutional arrangements. Studies have shown how dominant actors can collectively produce feeling rules that enable them to shame the ones who engage in disruptive behaviour (Creed, Hudson, Okhuysen & Smith-Crowe, 2014), or, in other institutional contexts, to use and induce fear to prevent disruption (Gill & Burrow, 2018). Besides the active use of emotions as tools or devices, engaging in the formation and production of an institutional context is also a means to prevent others from using these tools. Since the rules and norms prescribed by institutions encourage or discourage the experience and display of certain emotions, actors are in turn encouraged to explicitly conform to these

rules to ensure their legitimacy (Voronov & Weber, 2016) and consequently, some emotions can be denied and controlled in order to prevent institutional disruption or to promote powerful actors' institutional arrangement (Delmestri & Goodrick, 2016).

Emotions are powerful tools, but are also a necessity to engage in such processes. Let us focus on the actions performed by actors in institutional contexts. First, the actions some actors perform with the aim of creating, changing or maintaining institutions, to which institutional scholars refer as institutional work (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). The actions and interactions that constitute institutional work are performed through cognitive processes but also emotions, not only as rhetorical devices, but also as necessary elements for actors to perform their agency and engage in institutional work (Lawrence, Suddaby & Leca, 2009). Moreover, generally, engagement of other peoples in promoted practices, sustained by some institutional arrangements, the aim of an organisational change, is closely linked with emotional engagement. Studies of institutional logics, the sets of material practices, norms, values and symbolic constructions providing organizing principles at a societal level (Friedland & Alford, 1991), adopted and refined at the organisational and individual levels (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008), has demonstrated the importance of emotions in adoption of these logics. A study of Voronov and Vince (2012) shows the importance of emotions as a tool evoked by the “*fantasy*” that underlies an institutional logic, and as a fuel, in adoption or maintenance if people are emotionally invested in the logic, and in disruption if they are not, and if they possess the sufficient power to do so.

What is happening on the ground? Objects, bodies and everyday practices.

However, regardless of the way emotions are treated, from a cognitive psychological point of view or from a sociological one, we align with Freidland's (2018) recent work on institutional logics and argue that these works on emotions treat emotions in a too much instrumental way. We argue that the focus on feeling rules remains overly cognitive and that, if embeddedness in institutional contexts is critical to the experience and understanding of emotions (Zietsma & Toubiana, 2018), individuals are not only actors that are always evolving in some institutional logics that govern the way they behave, think and feel in their everyday life. People are also... people, persons, who chose reflexively to engage in some actor roles, but whose evolution in their lifeworld are not completely structured by institutions and the logics they carry (Schütz, 1964; Voronov & Weber, 2020). In order to answer the call for a more precise and embodied understanding of emotions in institutional theory (Creed et al., 2010),

we choose to focus on the way people come to inhabit institutions (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006), by bringing the material, everyday work back (Barley & Kunda, 2001). Doing so, we aim to contribute to the thriving literature on emotional processes within institutional logics theory, by accounting for the construction, enactment and grounding of a specific emotion (in our case: pride) during the instantiation of an institutional logic.

Therefore, we need a more material and embodied way to conceptualise institutional logics. Recently, institutional logics have been re-worked and described as a form of material practice, socially meaningful, which “*materiality is given by the objects deployed in practice and the corporeality of the practitioners.*” (Friedland & Arjaliès, 2021: 46) Teleologically oriented towards a cherished objective, a good, which Friedland (2018) calls an institutional substance to which people are affectively committed, an institutional logic articulates material objects and corporeal subjects in a practice that acquires meaning in virtue of the good that is produced. Emotional investment in this practice, in the relational arrangement between the subjects and the objects, helps rooting the emotion in the logic in a way that the emotion can be institutionalised (Friedland, 2018). Given our focus on the felt emotion linked to everyday work, we choose to give ontological primacy to the relationship between people and their activities constitutive and arranged by the practice (Smets, Aristidou & Whittington, 2017). That is, our aim is to account for the construction of an emotion dependant of a specific practice that is to be institutionalised in an organisational change. It has much to do to Creed et al.’s (2014) analysis of shame and episodes of shame, but we are grounding the specific emotion in relation both to the subject, the embodied individual, and the array of activities in which he engages to enact the practice. Also, we will need another theory of emotions that depart from the overly cognitive ones that are used in the literature we presented.

Emotions between culture, perceptions and feeling.

We propose to look at philosopher Jesse Prinz’ (2004, 2009) non-cognitive theory of emotions, which is a perceptual theory of emotions and as such accommodates with the phenomenological roots of institutional theory (Suddaby, Elsbach, Greenwood, Meyer & Zilber, 2010). According to this theory, emotions are “*embodied appraisals*”, a feeling of a change in the body following a triggering perception (Prinz, 2004: 51). Drawing on the work of Kenny (1963), we can assert that emotions have two kinds of objects, which are the elicitors of emotions. The particular object is an event, real or imagined, to which the registered bodily change experience (the emotion) refers causally (Prinz, 2009). Emotions

represent a formal object, a “*property in virtue of which an event [a particular object] elicits an emotion*” (Prinz, 2004: 62), like sadness representing a loss or pride representing a valued achievement that boosts one’s ego. Moreover, emotions are not mere feelings because these feelings carry meaning about how we are being in the world, they have contents (Prinz, 2004: 242). The nominal content is the change in the body that the emotion registers that tracks the real content, which is the theme that the emotion represents (Prinz, 2004: 69). For instance, if I am arachnophobic and I encounter a spider, seeing this spider will cause a heavier breathing, and I might tremble as well. The perception of the spider is the particular object that causes these changes in my body, the nominal content of what I experience as fear, tracking the real content of being threatened, for instance by a sudden move of the spider.

This theory is particularly interesting because it allows cultural intervention by a process that Prinz calls calibration (Prinz, 2004: 147). Calibration is the process of linking the triggering of an emotion with new eliciting causes that can be socially constructed. These perceptions are embedded in a calibration file that “*contains a set of representations that can each causally trigger the same (or similar) patterned bodily response*” (Prinz, 2014: 100). To illustrate calibration files, we can consider culturally specific emotions like the Japanese *ijirashii*, which is a “*kind of pleasure, somatically comparable to happiness*” (Prinz, 2004: 149) but elicited when “*seeing a praiseworthy person overcome an obstacle*” (*ibid.*) We can say some emotions in our Western world are similar to *ijirashii*, but the calibration process is certainly more achieved in the Japanese culture. As such, some emotions can have the same nominal content but different real contents, being different breeds of a same emotion (Prinz, 2004: 144). Also, anthropological sources have shown that some emotions can be institutionalised in a logic of action. For example, The !Kung people in southern Africa perform rituals embedding specific breathing techniques that induce pain and fear in a trance-like state, these emotions being necessary to obtain healing power (Lyon, 1999).

The case of pride: is there something to be proud of? – Research design

To sum up, we are interested in the interplay, in a context of organisational change, between two main concepts, institutional logics on the one hand, seen as a combination of a substance and a practice articulating various activities implying an ongoing relationship between subjects and objects, and emotions. Broadly conceived, organisational change implies a change in everyday work, the promotion of new practices that come replace the established ones. We know that in order to achieve a positive organisational change, to make change

recipients adhere to new ways of working, management has to diffuse positive emotions that are triggered by perceptions, and that perceptions triggers emotions depending on the logic in which people chose to adhere (Toubiana & Zietsma, 2017), which structures our calibration files. Besides, we also know that certain emotions can be institutionalised, and rooted in a logic (Friedland, 2018). According to this, if a certain emotion is elicited according to a logic of which it is constitutive, and that this same logic is disrupted by a new logic, how can managers play on this emotion to embark a positive change accorded to this new logic? We have to account for this sort of emotion transportation: that is a mystery yet to be solved (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007).

We argue that Prinz' non-cognitive theory of emotions is decisive, as decisive as the interest in individuals as embodied inhabitants of an incomplete institutional world, having to switch from a long established logic taken-for-granted, challenged by organisation change, to a promoted logic yet to be properly instantiated and institutionalised. A focus on interactions between people and their everyday material and symbolic world, on the affective commitments and conflicts they experience is our key to empirically account for the solving of the mystery (Hudson, Okhuysen & Creed, 2015). Our study is explorative, centred on emergent and situated relationship between practices and emotions (Smets et al., 2017), the latter being understood both as a key element of organisational life to be managed and, as far as promoting a logic equates to promoting an appropriate subject, as a micro-technology of power. As such, we situate our interest in emotions as navigating between a poststructuralist and an interpretive one (Sieben & Wettergren, 2010: 8).

We choose to focus on a specific emotion of pride, on the first hand because it is this emotion that appeared mysterious in our empirical material, and on the other hand because it is an important emotion of organisational life, notably because it provides a sense of belonging to the organisational members (Moisander, Hirsto & Fahy, 2016). Traditionally, pride represents an achievement that is valued, individually or collectively, that boosts ones ego (Lazarus, 1991). Thus, the shared understanding that gives meaning to everyday work and practices (Smets, Morris & Greenwood, 2012) can also concern the valued achievement that pride represents, and, moreover, the enactment of a logic of action, in this sense, can also be accompanied with pride (Malhotra, Zietsma, Morris & Smets, 2021).

We will introduce our empirical case and the method we employ to select and analyse our data, before accounting for the construction and enactment of a newly crafted pride in a three-step story. First, we will present pride as part of the established institutional logic, rooted in

the practice of employees, before turning to the effect of change on this logic and the way the restoration of pride in a new logic is theorised by management and change agents, and we will then finish by describing the way pride is crafted and associated to the new logic by a change agent.

A case of organisational change – empirical material and method.

Our empirical study is stemming from a one-year field research we conducted between November 2018 and October 2019. The organisation in which the research took place is a large industrial company in France, which activity is to conceive, supervise the exploitation of and maintain a strategic infrastructure. The company is publicly owned and central for the life of French people. Consequently, it is frequently subjected to political and institutional pressures. The organisation has been criticized by numerous politicians, institutions and French people for its alleged inefficiency and therefore being too costly, for its outdated work processes, or “*immobilisme*” (which can be translated to “*inertia*”, and not willing to modernize and adapt to the changing economic context). This rhetoric continued to thrive as the European legislations that opened up the national markets for the exploitation of the infrastructure to cross-border competition. Institutional actors, national and European, emphasized the necessity to reduce operational costs by outsourcing some of the tasks and using digital technologies to enhance the overall productivity, in order for the organisation to be ready to absorb the upsurge of activity that will occur with the entry of new exploiting actors. Therefore, during the 2010s, the organisation effectively began its change. It consists of the deployment of technological solutions such as an Enterprise Resource Planner (ERP) system for maintenance works, or mobile devices for the centralisation of the reporting of everyday maintenance operations, all of these associated with new Information Systems. To promote change and help the appropriation of technological tools by employees in their everyday work, a cultural change program was also initiated.

It is in this context that we conducted our field study, aiming at understanding on the one hand the reconfiguration of everyday work due to the introduction of digital tools in employees’ everyday activities, and on the other hand how employees perceived this reconfiguration and the way it affected their role in the organisation. Also, our field study was aiming at qualitatively measuring the gap between what strategists envisaged and the reality of the field. To do so, we gathered empirical material from different sources.

First, we had access to texts stemming from the organisation, detailing the strategy, the way technological tools function or rules and procedures governing the activities of employees. This texts collection was completed by other texts that we found on the Internet. It accounts for 1064 pages of different kinds of documents (we will refer to these documents by the code “DOC”).

Second, we conducted 149 semi-structured interviews with 183 actors of the different departments and different hierarchical levels, accounting for 150 hours of recordings and 3652 pages of transcriptions, completed by 744 pages notes taken during the interviews. Broadly conceived, we interviewed five kinds of people, and we will use only four in this paper. The strategists (to whom we will refer using the code “STRAT”) were asked about the way they conceive the organisation nowadays, and the way they envisage the organisation if the transformation is achieved in an ideal manner. Given our initial focus on the role of technology in the transformation, we asked them also to describe the why and how technological tools are conceived and deployed on the ground, in the everyday work of employees.

Then, we interviewed what we will call the employees, by far the most important population in terms of number of interviews, who are the people working on the ground and whose day-to-day activities are the most transformed. It includes the operators without managerial responsibilities (to whom we will refer using the code “EMP”), and their direct first-line managers (called “*proximity managers*” by the organisation and to whom we will refer using the code “PROX”). We asked them to describe their everyday work, pointing the most important aspects of it and why it is important, and how technological tools were implemented in these activities, their effects and the way they envisage the why of this transformation.

Finally, we also interviewed change agents (to whom we will refer using the code “CHANGER”), who are people working in the different local business units and whose objective is mainly cultural, that is to say to foster the adoption of technological tools by the employees, and to diffuse the new organisational culture using corporate communication, creating events and team buildings and so on. We asked them on the way they conceive their objectives and what are their day-to-day actions to achieve them.

The interviews took place in the offices of the interviewees, and they were all asked beforehand for their acceptance of the recording (they could stop it whenever they wanted to) of the interviews, after we had detailed the reasons of the study and signified that they would

remain anonymous. The interviews were loosely structured and we preferred keeping them informal, sometimes but rarely going back to our prepared questions (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012).

In addition to this, meetings were regularly organised with representatives of the main jobs that constitute the organisation and other strategists, in order to adjust our thinking and to identify the main points of interest to deepen in the future interviews.

Like other studies of emotions in the workplace, our interest in pride is quite serendipitous (Gabriel, 1993; Carroll, Parker & Inkson, 2010). Given the exploratory status and nature of our study and thoughts and the – too – large amount of empirical data we gathered, we choose to select some of the most relevant interviews and documents in order to follow our research objective of sketching a theory development using qualitative data (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011), and more precisely to account for the construction of a new kind of pride rooted in a combination of an institutional substance and some promoted practices. As such, we follow an abductive method centred on the main themes that were exposed in our literature review and our theoretical framework (Costas & Kärreman, 2016), namely institutional logics and emotions. These themes are decomposed in a way that we are searching for the intertwinement of materiality, that is objects, places, people as bodies and as actors, their interactions and physical proximity or distance from one another, and the perceptions that can trigger, or not, pride, in the everyday enactment of the combination of practice and substance (Jones, Boxenbaum & Anthony, 2013).

Results.

The pre-existing logic of pride.

Let us begin by an account of what makes a proximity manager we interviewed feel proud. At the time of the interview, he has been working as proximity manager in the job of maintenance for only half a year, but he has a nearly 15 years of experience in the maintenance job overall. He is responsible for a team of 17 people working under his management. His job consists in managing the surveillance of local electrical installations and sometimes organise repair yards when an installation is broken. He begins by telling us the main aspects of his everyday activity:

“There are two aspects in my job. The first one that is very like “office work” and administrative-like things, and I try to finish it quickly in order to have time to go working

with my agents on the field. When I succeed doing this, I feel like I'm working the right way. [...] When it comes to my agents, guys have this impression of job well done when there are construction works to do, not only simple infrastructure surveillance. When they find something that is broken on an installation, and then we organise ourselves to fix it.” (PROX 1)

Immediately, he makes a distinction between his administrative responsibilities and what drives him the most, namely be present, physically, with the agents he manages, and on the field. Success, for him, is located outside of office and with the team. Speaking for his team, he develops the understanding of what makes good work, which is collective organising in order to fix a broken installation. Pride, as illustrated by the following example, is indeed located in this context of teamwork:

“There is a kind of pride, of surpassing oneself. The best moments I lived were moments when we did things collectively. This is also the case at work, when we manage to organise ourselves, to get the right tools that were a bit difficult to get, to go on and to solve the problem. There is this feeling of teamwork, when we manage to completely solve a problem that seemed complex. I know that it might only happen three or four times a year, we don't success every time, but when we do, I feel like a sense of belonging.” (PROX 1)

He accounts for the feeling of pride as a feeling of teamwork, resulting from the collective accomplishment of something complex. He offers a quick description of what means to him the collective organisation, namely getting the right tools, a resource that is shared among other teams and can be therefore difficult to get, and in the interview, he exhibits an example of the “reparation of 50 cables” that required he and his team to seek to retrieve the technical schemata, analyse them and then preparing the cables for the installation. To sum up, pride is felt when perceiving an accomplishment resulting from an array of coordination activities that stretches over time, in a context surrounded by technical tools and materials, job-related talks among team members and physical proximity between him and his team and between his team and the place where physical reparation effort is exerted. But why are all those arrangement elements important? We propose to turn to the interviews of two other proximity managers in order to account for the core objective of this collective organisation and the reason why this practice is essential.

The first one has been working in the maintenance job for 17 years and a half at the time of the interview, and nearly 10 years as a proximity manager. He managed multiple teams and had been established as the proximity manager in one of the most demanding areas for two

years. On the contrary of the previous interviewee, he works on the mechanical aspect of the infrastructure. He simply sums up his job as follows:

“My job, well, the job, it’s not my job but the job of every proximity manager, is to ensure the respect of technical security. That’s what I said earlier, there is nothing to add.” (PROX 2)

“When I speak of respecting the technique, I mean respecting the security of the personnel, that is our pillar, the base of our job. And I can speak about it days and days, if you want details.” (PROX 2)

He illustrates abruptly but directly what is immediately cited when the question of the core issue of the job is asked to proximity managers and their agents, the security of the everyday operations. Hence, not every achievement can trigger pride, it has to respect some guidelines, to be realised according to the rules of the job. The collective aspect is not only a matter of physical proximity and doing what it is interesting regardless of everything else, it corresponds to this logic of ensuring technical security in the way the team can achieve something complex and difficult.

The third interviewee had been, at the time of the interview, working for nearly 20 years in the maintenance job, as a proximity manager in mechanical maintenance for 8 years, and he manages a team of 16 agents. When we asked him about the way technological tools were disrupting his everyday work, he stated that it was pulling him away from his team and from the other proximity managers that were located next to his office, and stated the importance of teamwork and physical proximity for the sake of technical security, beginning by the regular informal meetings:

“I used to learn a lot during these meetings, by sharing with colleagues from other specialities, there was a dialogue [...] We know a bit of every maintenance speciality, owing to this dialogue. Nowadays, the PM who comes in, who uses the softwares, ... he won’t have the same knowledge, because we acquire this knowledge by speaking with colleagues. That’s the way it is. We learn by dialoguing, not only by attending official trainings.” (PROX 3)

Because a complex repair yard is composed of multiple kinds of materials pertaining to different specialities, like electrical cables or more mechanical components, it demands sharing the understanding of what the infrastructure is made of and how everyone can organise in order to accomplish the job. Therefore, we can assert that pride as experienced by the employees is not a generic pride, it is calibrated on a number of perceptions related to the respect of technical security, and it drives the collective organisation demanding physical

proximity. Discussions, gathering around a table to examine technical schemata, exchanging knowledge between colleagues and helping each other to do its part once on the field, is constitutive of the logic in which pride of the job is rooted.

Disruption of the logic and the problem of pride.

*“We’re spending more time on the software... [...] We’re spending more time on the computer than on the field... **A little construction work, one hour and it’s done. And you spent three hours at the office.**” (PROX 3)*

As the last interview excerpt shows, technological tools are disrupting the logic of action, since it imposes more time in the office and consequently disrupts the physical aspect of the job. Moreover, if technical tools and materials are part of what constitutes the organisation of everyday work, it is not the case of technological material. For instance, e-mails are not recognised as being constitutive of the job, as an employee puts it:

*“I don’t read my e-mails each morning, this is not my job, **I’m not “mailer”.**” (EMP 1)*

Here lies a problem of change management. Strategists and institutional texts are explicitly mentioning pride as part of what they value in the organisation, or even as objectives to achieve. In the main institutional text describing the objectives of the organisation for the following decade, an introductory written speech by the CEO explicitly states:

*“It is essential for us that our collaborators could find a **renewed source of engagement, of trust, and of pride.**” (DOC 1)*

Engagement and pride are linked in the way the organisation conceive its following years, and pride is, in another institutional text, linked to the technological aspect of change:

*“**MAKING EVERYONE PROUD** [...] Making new technologies an opportunity for everyone to succeed in her or his work.” (DOC 2)*

The problem, however, is to have something to be proud of. We interviewed a top manager whose job is to manage a large technological project that has many implications for the future of everyday work of employees. He comes from the maintenance job and has in mind this background, knowing the conditions of pride as experienced by employees. He makes a decisive remark:

“People won’t be fully in charge of the organisation of their work anymore. There will be optimisation, according to certain indicators... So, we really feel like these tools will dispossess him from... We should find something that gives back pride to the profession.”
(STRAT 1)

The main job of change management, then, is to find something to be proud of. The solution at hand, is to rely upon technological tools and the cultural change program that encourage employees to appropriate new technological tools by using them to innovate, that is to say to craft and propose small applications on their professional smartphone or other softwares that permit this kind of initiative. It is part of the objectives of the organisation to gain legitimacy as an innovative organisation. During its interview, the top manager responsible for the implementation of technological change in the whole organisation establishes a clear link between pride and this way of working with technological tools:

“There will be a real pride of working with cutting-edge technological tools, of having completely included these technologies in their everyday work” (STRAT 2)

“We have a strategy that consists of valuing small innovations employees make.” (STRAT 2)

Pride, as envisaged, will come from another logic of actions that incorporates the invention of small applications, another logic of craft, but relying on tools that are not related to technical maintenance tools. Instead, it has to rely on technological tools that constitute the envisaged future worker, fully equipped with new technologies.

Crafting this pride, instantiating the logic: the reward of an innovative employee.

Employees do not react the same way when perceiving technological tools. Some have an interest in them, and do not mind crafting small applications. This is the case of another proximity manager, who differs from the others we told the story previously. The following excerpt is from a proximity manager that is fairly new to the job. He corresponds to another way of becoming proximity manager, not because of his experience in the job, but owing to his engineering background. It is furthermore an illustration of the new strategy of recruitment the organisation put in place, a strategy that has to exhibit the new image of the organisation as a technologically up-to-date one in order to regain attractiveness on the labour market. As an engineer, familiar with new technologies, he crafted applications for his team and tells his discovery of the possibilities that the technological tools permit:

“As soon as we discovered this, we were happy. We quickly crafted small apps to use with the agents. They are happy too. We are lucky to work with agents that are interested in this, it’s not always the case.” (PROX 4)

What is interesting is that he did not exhibit pride. He is happy to work in this environment, not bothered at all by the deployment of technological tools, but he lacks the pride that has, strategically, to be found. We can easily understand that, as someone familiar with this functioning, crafting applications is not specifically something that represents a valued, ego-enhancing achievement. The pride has therefore, and it is our point of interest, to be crafted in order to be associated with the relationship between employees and technological material, with the achievement of crafting small technological applications.

Finally, we witnessed this process. A group of employees had crafted an application that simplify and render easier an action embedded in their day-to-day activity. In their local business unit, a change agent, whose objective is to promote change and appropriation of technological tools, accounts for how she rewarded this behaviour to make pride exist and to anchor the emotion in this new, not already established, logic of action:

“I demanded to the local executive committee members to make an example. We did a party, that is to say we did a kind of official inauguration. I wanted to value this event using the official communication journal, to make them proud of what they did. As soon as we value these pride experiences and we honour people, it is called recognition. It gave these employees motivation to continue. This is a virtuous circle.” (CHANGER 1)

Because she has access to the local executive committee of the business unit, she can call them to assist to the rewarding ceremony, in order to benefit from their legitimacy and instituting power. The gathering of these actors in an official ceremony, with a reward, gives the ego-boost needed for a pride to exist. Plus, she can now use the official corporate communication to make this pride diffuse in her local context, and she asserts that it created a positive dynamic promoting change. Hence, the conclusion is that, instead of any positive emotion that could have existed, she made pride exist, the rewarded employees surely bodily felt it, and at the same time she linked this emotion to an achievement that is congruent with the promoted everyday appropriation practice.

Conclusive remarks – not only the behaviour, the emotion itself.

What these stories tell is not only the creation and promotion of behaviours that are meant to elicit a specific emotion, the construction of calibration files as in other studies of other emotions (Creed et al., 2014; Gill & Burrow, 2018). Here, the specific emotion, pride, is part of the aims of the organisational change and of the fantasy underlying the change (Voronov & Vince, 2012), as defined by the top management and highlighted by the organisational texts. However, pride is already experienced within the pre-existing institutional logic. The tangle of materiality, physical proximity, technical objects and everyday relations between employees is not randomly organised, it follows a taken-for-granted practice that stretches over time and has to be like it is in order to respect the technical security of operations. As such, these tacit rules have to be followed in order for pride to be elicited: it is this kind of behaviour that the calibration file for pride in the organisation contains (Prinz, 2004).

Top managers identify a contradiction (Seo & Creed, 2002) between the old way of working structured by the taken-for-granted institutional logic and the introduction of new technologies into the work processes. The contradiction leads to the entire crafting of another pride that would sustain and promote the new logic. The real content of this pride is still an achievement, but is calibrated to fit this practice embedding technological tools as institutional objects (Friedland, 2018). Institutional work is performed by a group of actors that use their different forms of capital in order to institutionalise this specific pride (Voronov and Vince, 2012). The rewarding ceremony is crucial for the honoured employees to register the nominal content of pride, without this ceremony the elicited emotion could only have been a mere satisfaction or mild happiness (Prinz, 2004). It links this experience of pride with the proper behaviour to be encouraged as defined in the calibration file. This emotion, in turn, can help promoting the new institutional logic and serve for future institutional work. It can be used as a rhetorical resource (Moisander et al., 2016), and the fact that the rewarded employees continued this way suggests pride can be used to recruit new change advocates by making them emotionally invested in the new institutional logic (Voronov and Vince, 2012).

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