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Are you there, family spirit? Integrating "organisational ghosts" into the strategic practices of family businesses

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This paper describes and analyses how a leader of a family business secured its independence and future by tapping into the literature on (i) the phenomena of the lingering "presence" of founding leaders after their death, (ii) the concept of commemorative rituals and (iii) other specific forms of organisational remembrance. From a theoretical standpoint, this paper confirms the typology put forward by Bazin and Leclair (2019) on "organisational ghosts", and goes further by examining strategic practices integrating this concept and the literature that inspired it. From a managerial perspective, this paper serves as a useful reference point for all leaders, especially those of family businesses, who coexist with the traces and "ghosts" of their deceased predecessors. This paper shows that the latter can represent an intangible asset that the organisation can integrate concretely into its strategic practices.

In a family business, the leader's death is a time when filial ties as well as the continuity and legitimacy of managerial power have to be secured. The business thus begins a phase in which, more or less imperceptibly, the late leader's presence still lingers over it. It is a tense period of time during which the company's future may be at stake and the late leader sometimes seems to return through symbolic manifestations in the organisation's life, so as to assist and lend legitimacy to the handover of managerial power.[1]

For the case study presented in this paper, we used an autoethnographic approach with an outside observer to explore the experiences of a man who took over his family's 500-employee accounting firm after two successive unexpected deaths in the family. His early days at the helm of the firm were shaped by different symbolic manifestations of his father and brother, both of whom had died. Initially taking him by surprise and manifesting in the form of traces, pictures, desires and ideas that seemingly clung to him, these symbolic manifestations were in part channelled, and even deliberately worked into various organisational rituals and strategic practices.

Accordingly, this case study enables us to develop our thinking about the role and workability of integrating symbolic "ghosts" into the handover process of a family business after the founder's death.

After a brief review of the literature and a description of the methodology used, we will present our findings followed by a discussion of their impact and a conclusion.

Overview of main tools to analyse the phenomena of the lingering "presence" of late leaders described in the literature

The literature calls on us to use conceptual tools to analyse the phenomena of the lingering "presence" of founding leaders after their death. This complex analytical exercise also draws on the concept of commemorative rituals and other specific forms of remembrance.

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The literature calls on us to use conceptual tools to analyse the phenomena of the lingering "presence" of founding leaders after their death

Described in the literature as a theoretical concept, "organisational ghosts" can serve as a tool to analyse how actors who are physically absent haunt "the relations and struggles of the [organisation's] present" (Orr, 2014).

Originating in the field of social sciences in the work of Derrida (1993), who develops the concept of spectrality in *Specters of Marx*. According to Derrida, we should try to seek out, not run away from, the "ghosts" which haunt us. Establishing an artefact of dialogue with a "ghost" may be a challenging undertaking, but it allows the haunted to work on themselves, explore the meaning of their existence and see their own life and actions through the useful lens of an ethical imperative which inhabits them while also transcending them.

Bazin and Leclair (2019) recently contributed their own understanding of the concept of "organisational ghosts". These authors underscore the unique reality of "spectral figures" in businesses. They develop an interpretative framework outlining these many, complex and ambiguous figures by way of the "epistemic ghost conveying an untold secret" and the "ethical spectre embodying an otherness to be embraced" (Bazin & Leclair, 2019). While the ghost figure serves as a conduit for posing scientific questions about an organisation's unspoken aspects and enigmas from the past, the spectral figure helps to question the ethical foundations of a business's actions in the organisation's present. Bazin and Leclair also encourage our scientific community to show a keener interest in the manner in which leaders learn to coexist with such "ghosts". In particular, they emphasise the need to approach the concept of "organisational ghosts" with neutrality, in the same way that you would approach a mere analytical tool. "By turns individual and collective, manipulative and manipulated, looking back on the past and to the future, ghosts reveal themselves to be a potentially powerful tool for analysing organisations. Moreover, learning to encounter them – to tango with them – can enable actors to put down deeper roots in their organisations and make their practices more meaningful" (Bazin & Leclair, 2019).

Among these "organisational ghosts", the late founder is of particular importance, especially in the context of a family business. When a founder dies, they leave behind traces, rituals and stories which survive them. As another paper puts it, "the death of the founder of an organi[s]ation is believed to produce a unique opportunity to understand the myth constructed around the creation process" through forms of posthumous manifestations (De Brito, Da Silva & De Jesus Muniz, 2010). Organisational researchers only very rarely engage in the study of such manifestations.

This is likely due to both the fact that these arenas are not very accessible to organisational researchers and that the study of such phenomena inevitably elicits major pushback from other people. In his book *Patron de droit divin*, Roger Martin recounts how a manuscript he wrote in May 1954 about Camille Cavallier, who ran a company in Pont-à-Mousson, France before he died in 1926, was "buried" because it offended the late businessman's family and made the company uneasy (Martin, 1984, pp. 165-169). Another illustration of the problems that can arise when writing and publishing work on this subject is that of issue 7 of the French management journal *Gérer et Comprendre*, which contains the introduction to a book about Louis Renault followed by a note from the editorial board calling on a publisher to release the book in its entirety (Séjournet, 1987). The work ended up being published, but notably left out the thorny topic of posthumous manifestations of late leaders (Séjournet, 1988).

In an effort to overcome these difficulties, bring an end to such silence and fill the void in the literature, we draw on the literature covering commemorative rituals and other specific forms of remembrance.

This analytical exercise also draws on the concept of commemorative rituals and other specific forms of remembrance

As Bell, Tienari and Hansson observed in 2014, relatively little research has delved into the commemorative practices of organisations, while that regarding commemorative rituals is even more limited. Studies have examined the commemorative portraiture of late leaders and organisations' commemorative places dedicated to them (Cutcher, Dale & Tyler, 2019). But if we want to deepen our understanding of the concept of commemorative rituals for late leaders, we have to look to anthropology.

The field of anthropology defines a commemorative ritual, to cite Saint Augustine, as "a present of things past". It provides the current generation with an opportunity to spend time with their predecessors. A ritual is, more specifically, a "process of regeneration, a necessary restructuring at regular intervals, in order to reintegrate individuals and the community into the melting pot of their history, their memory, and their founding ideals" (Lardellier, 2019). A ritual's role "is to mobili[s]e a more or less fluid and open-textured network of ordinary commonsense beliefs in order to build logically and factually impossible worlds that are readily conceivable, memorable, and transmissible" (Atran, 2002). Rituals involving the delivery of a speech can lend legitimacy to the speaker by reminding the audience of the origin of the speaker's power (Bourdieu, 2014). A classic essay by Pierre Clastres (1974) also points out the connection between power and speech in his anecdote about the "prolixity" of the Indian chief who narrates stories about the tribe's ancestors. Rituals can specifically involve "ghosts", especially in the context of religious rituals (Boyer, 1994; Sperber, 1997; Smith & Stewart, 2011).

This connection between power and speech is linked to the concept of "numen", which for anthropologists designates "a transcendent force which can incarnate itself in certain individuals (priests, sorcerers, sovereigns, etc.), imbuing them with some great power or special gifts", including the power to evoke the dead (Lardellier, 2011).

At the time of the handover of a family business, would "numinous" successors not be able to evoke, or even "invoke" the deceased so as to make them "visible" to each person during commemorative rituals, and even go as far as integrating them in the context of specific strategic practices?

In the next section of this paper, we will discuss a case study of one such utilisation of a late leader during the handover of a family business.

Overview of case study and methodology: an autoethnography involving a family business and an outside observer

This case study involves a man who unexpectedly became the leader of his family's accounting firm after a series of deaths in the family. The methodological approach of this case study is that of a co-produced autoethnography with an outside observer, and it draws on a rich and diverse variety of materials.

Case study overview
On 26 January 2017, the 85-year-old founder of a family-owned accounting firm with more than 500 employees and whose main line of business was advising start-up entrepreneurs, died. Only one of his children, a son, survived him. It thus fell to the son to keep the family business going and pass it on to another generation further down the line. This son is the lead author of this paper. He had branched out of the family business to lead a different career. Since his takeover of the firm, he has had unexpected encounters with traces of the life of his father and brother, which he documented. At first these encounters thoroughly disconcerted him. At the same time, he gradually started to sense that the firm's stakeholders seemed to view him as able to evoke the deceased and to speak in the name of the firm's "ghosts", similar to a lesser form of "numen". Taking on this ascribed role – and in order to consolidate his legitimacy – the "surviving leader" decided to organise an event in honour of his father that would celebrate what he dedicated his career to: helping and advising entrepreneurs. The idea was also to show the firm's clients and competitors that it, too, had survived the death of its founder. The event took the form of a pitch competition with a top award of €30,000 named in honour of the "ghost". This commemorative event involved over six months of planning. Employees, along with the firm's long-standing clients and collaborators were invited to attend.

Methodology and data collection and analysis
This paper is a co-produced autoethnography with an outside observer/co-author (Kempster et al., 2008; Herrmann et al., 2013). The lead author heads up the business he inherited after his father's death. He documented this period of his life in a journal he kept for four years. The lead author asked the co-author to take part in the case study, tasking him with observing the firm's organisational dynamics and conducting interviews. This participant observation lasted three years and involved keeping a journal and interviewing the firm's partners, employees, clients and collaborators. These interviews were transcribed. Additionally, the co-author visited the firm's various offices and had an immersion experience at one of them. The planning of the pitch competition and the gala night itself involved recordings that were fully transcribed by the co-author.

These relatively rich and diverse materials were read several times in full by the co-author/observer. These readings were done without notetaking or prior bibliographic research. The idea was to practice "evenly suspended attention", a listening technique described by Dumez (2013) as a useful way to avoid the risk of circularity. The theme of manifestations and rituals connected to the late founder emerged from this phase of evenly suspended attention led by the co-author/observer. Both authors met regularly to discuss this experience and the theme, holding confirmatory interviews where observations made during the evenly suspended attention phase could be further clarified.

Findings

We have broken down our findings into three narrative stages. In the first, we see how the successor gradually realised that the family firm's stakeholders viewed him as having the power to evoke the late leader. In the second, the successor got involved in organising a special commemorative ritual, as he took seriously others' belief in his ability to evoke his deceased family members. Lastly, this ritual led people to talk about their memories of the late founder and revealed the existence of another, hidden family "ghost", whose presence brought about the firm's existence.

The successor gradually realised that the family firm's stakeholders viewed him as having the power to evoke the late leader
The fate of the current leader of the firm was sealed when two members of his family died one after another. "My father passed away and so did my two brothers. Everyone who had led the organisation was dead. Except me. I'm the only survivor, along with my mother, who was acquainted with the firm's entire history" [Hervé Colas]. When he took up his late father's role, it was not the logical conclusion to a deliberate ambition, but his submission to a form of fate, without him having a choice in the matter (*nolens volens*).

At first the firm's deceased "haunted" him through survivor's guilt. "My brother Bruno's presence, which I sensed when I looked at his paintings, his pens and

his office things, came to 'unsettle' me in the form of survivor's guilt" [Lead author]. The deceased family members seemed to haunt symbolic places such as the offices they worked in when they were alive. "It was incredibly hard for me to sit down in my brother's chair and at his desk. No other office was free when I returned. The office had become a mausoleum since no one had dared to clean it out after my brother died. When I found handwritten notes dating after his death, I realised that my father would come sit in his chair, almost as if he wanted to bounce ideas off Bruno, as was his habit…" [Hervé Colas].

Certain seemingly insignificant objects stirred meaningful memories and emotions. "When my father died, I noticed that he kept a yo-yo and a little wooden spinning top in his desk drawer. It's something I mentioned at his funeral service as a sign of his playful and simple way of approaching life. A short time later, while visiting one of his close partners, I saw that he also had a little wooden spinning top on his desk… Seeing me look at the spinning top, Alain said to me: 'Yes, Jean-Claude [Hervé Colas's father] gave it to me, and I play with it when I'm on the phone'" [Hervé Colas].

Little by little, the newly minted leader began to realise that he himself was, in the eyes of other members of the firm, able to create symbolic connections with his late father and brother. "Sometimes I emphasise my physical similarities with my father, as I'm built like him and our faces are almost alike. I'll wear a hat like he did, which makes the resemblance even more striking… I know exactly what to do if I want to scare Martine and Vanessa, all that's needed is to imitate his way of walking into a room, calling out Corinne's name loudly, etc. There are so many ways I can disguise myself as Jean-Claude if I want to play ghost. I talk about my father or my brother when I don't know what to say and it's absolutely necessary I say something. I let my emotions show and think back to what I said at the convention in Le Touquet when I imitated Bruno while talking about his cigarette and the way he'd tap it against his lighter – which made Virginie, who liked him to bits, cry" [Hervé Colas].

Although he sometimes evoked these memories deliberately, the firm's leader also admitted that he occasionally felt overwhelmed by them. "At times I feel like I'm lending my body to intentions that weren't mine to begin with – as if I'm lending my body to something that doesn't have one. In reality, instead of being the owner of a firm, I'm possessed by ideas and intentions in relation to the firm. I hear a voice like my father's tell me that I have to get the firm to meet such and such revenue objective. And I do it in his place" [Hervé Colas].

Accordingly, the leader can thus be perceived as able to make traces of the organisation's ghosts appear, whether unintentionally or by evoking them or holding rituals. "What I know for sure is that bringing up my father and brother allows me to form a 'bridge', a link, a mimetic connection between my father and me. And this connection is important because it establishes a connection with the past, or to venture even further a connection with another world. When I evoke my father, I'm creating a connection with a world that isn't there

anymore, but which serves as a way to guide me in creating the world of the present. I'm referring to the use of the most basic ritual units – which are called 'ritemes' – and I can combine them based on the circumstances. I'm a sort of 'organisational ritual tank'" [Hervé Colas].

Taking seriously others' belief in his ability to evoke his deceased family members, the successor got involved in organising a special commemorative ritual

After this slow realisation process, the lead author arrived at the decision to "summon" the "ghost" to a special organisational ritual. It would take the form of a pitch competition and involve the firm's partners for six months, at the culmination of which a gala night would be held and an award named in the founder's honour would be given out.

The competition and its accompanying award were explicitly devised as an offering to the late leader. "I had this idea of making a sacrificial offering so that my dead father would receive a warm welcome from the gods. This idea of a sacrificial ritual has been around for several thousand years" [Lead author].

The competition also provided an opportunity to revive the firm's values by retelling the epic story of its founding and to inspire enthusiasm and confidence regarding the firm's future. "I'd like to say a few words about this award [named in honour of the father]. My dad, a man of modest means who grew up in a small town, built a firm of over 500 people. He sparked an entrepreneurial drive in many. Behind every entrepreneur, there are often role models, heroes, family members and friends who they looked up to. My father was that person for a lot of people: employees, interns, clients, friends and other collaborators of the firm. His encouraging spirit and creative energy contributed to the firm's growth, as well as the growth of a number of start-ups that went on to become leaders in their field. […] We want our gatherings to be opportunities to discuss the firm's future, in order to always be better prepared to face continuously unprecedented or uncertain business environments. We also want this gathering to energise our clients, so that we can forge ahead with an encouraging, friendly and stimulating dialogue" [Lead author, address given at the gala night].

The winner of the competition received an award, which included a cash prize, along with an item associated with the late founder: a spinning top, Jean-Claude's favourite item which he would give out as a gift to his family and friends, an object through which he continued to live on. "When I looked into the origins of the spinning top game, I realised that it had a very rich history and symbolism, particularly when it comes to the game of dreidel Jewish people play during Hanukkah – at the time of the Hellenisation of Judea, when the city of Antioch had prohibited Judaism, the game allowed groups of people to hide the study and transmission of the Talmud. An early form of a basic gambling game, I also saw it as a sort of 'symbol' of the entrepreneurial experience made up of gains and losses. Then there's

the protagonist of the movie *Inception*, who uses a spinning top to find out which layer of reality he is in… yet, our line of business, accounting, is often recognised within organisations as 'reality'. So I had my 'pocket gift' to give out to the pitch competition participants, as well as a symbolic and commemorative story to tell in giving this small present to my fellow colleagues, who I imagine playing with the spinning top later on and being reminded of the firm. I want us to be remembered as a family business, an aspect that I see as 'reassuring' – the firm isn't a corporation that only exists to make money, it has real people in charge who can be reached if they need to be told off – and 'reinsuring' – as the marketing lingo goes when buying a product or a service – which anchors the firm as a family enterprise, straight down five generations from my great-grandfather to my nephew" [Lead author].

Moreover, the competition was an opportunity to celebrate the act of creating and to invite the "ghosts" to this celebration to show how the past mixes with the present and how they may come together in the act of creating. "I tell start-ups two things that I didn't learn in business school, but here at the firm. The first is that the opposite of death isn't life; it's creation. To enjoy life, you have to create. And in the tradition of Greek heroes, acting and creating is the path to immortality. So you see, Andy Warhol, the inventor of the 15 minutes of fame, is cracking open a bottle of champagne with my father tonight. The second thing I say is that entrepreneurs are like artists in that they are overcome with emotion when the force of life wins out over the inertia of matter. Life gives off a very strong signal when it wins. This signal is a gift only known by people who have already created – this gift, it's this wonderful momentum, this movement which pushes you to dance and which applauds your success after long, intense efforts. This simple gift life gives is called joy. The joy of creating is a dopamine rush" [Lead author, address given at the gala night].

Lastly, the competition sent an implicit yet clear message to the public that the firm was not for sale and that, while its new leader may have arrived at its helm without wanting it, he had no intention of dismantling the firm. "You don't sell the dead, especially after making them an offering" [Lead author].

Lastly, this ritual led people to talk about their memories of the late founder and revealed the existence of another, hidden family "ghost", whose presence brought about the firm's existence

During the planning of the competition, and to an even greater extent after the gala night, people began to open up about the imprint Jean-Claude had left on them. We collected a number of accounts from partners, employees and clients who recounted how certain memorable experiences they had had with Jean-Claude continued to inspire them. They also recounted how they spontaneously did an artificial and personal maieutic exercise involving the late leader. When faced with an issue, be it complex or even trivial, to better work out how they might address it, these individuals asked themselves what Jean-Claude would have done

in their situation. And in the heat of this theoretical exercise, some admitted that they even initiated an artificial artefact of dialogue with Jean-Claude's "ghost".

One such example of this involved Jean-Claude's views on taking on new clients and employees. A partner told us: "I remember my job interview with Jean-Claude. He asked me how I'd react to an openly racist client [the partner interviewed is non-white]. My reply was that I'd take a step back, remain professional and act as if nothing was amiss. Jean-Claude paused for a second while looking me in the eyes and further pressed: 'No, honestly, just between the two of us, what would you do? Really?' I maintained that I would remain professional. Then Jean-Claude said to me: 'I don't believe you. If you really mean that, it'd be a serious mistake. You have to choose your clients. Never forget that. Choose them for their human qualities above all else. We're a family firm. We're concerned with the long term. Our clients have to be like us. So, if you realise that a prospect or a client is racist, you show them the door, physically and immediately. Don't compromise when it comes to human values'" [A partner]. The same partner went on to say that whenever he had a meeting with a prospect or a job candidate, he felt like Jean-Claude was still in the office with him and telling him: 'Consider the human side, not just the business or technical angle. Is this someone you want to choose? What's your intuition? Do you want them as a client, as an employee?" [A partner].

Another partner shared with us that he still feels haunted by Jean-Claude, especially when he listens to jazz: "I've been in contact with Jean-Claude virtually every day from 1984 through to today. Yes, I said today. I know he's dead, but he lives on inside of us. He was, he is, a captain of industry, warm, awe-inspiring, a real gentleman. Beneath his gruff exterior, he was sentimental, interested in people, in children. He was a fan of jazz. We had that in common. Ragtime, stride. When I listen to it, he's there with me" [A partner].

One of the firm's collaborators also recounted how Jean-Claude's "ghost" remains present to him during the social events the firm hosts: "I've never been in a meeting with Jean-Claude where there wasn't champagne. Everything revolved around champagne. He believed that people are more productive when they share a good time together. Whenever I'm having a glass of champagne with people from the firm, I feel that he's still around and toasting with us" [A client].

When a secretary from the firm began to worry about the disappearance of a box of photos of Jean-Claude and recalled the yearly meetings of a secretarial club which he helped create, she referred to him in the present tense: "He must be upset that this box of photos and archives is missing. I have to ask Jacky if he took the box and, if he did, tell him to give it back to us" [A secretary].

Lastly, this ritual of opening up about Jean-Claude led to the revelation of the presence of a secret third family ghost. After the pitch competition, the surviving leader revealed that Jean-Claude had founded the firm around the time of the death of his daughter, who died within a

few days of being born. "My father has influenced me to see the firm like my young sister who was born and who died before me. When I'm looking after the firm, I'm looking after a person who doesn't have a body, I'm looking after a ghost who mustn't be mistreated" [Hervé Colas].

The opening up ritual thus brought to light the existence of artefacts of dialogue with the late founder, ones that were more intimate and personal within the firm and its collaborators. Furthermore, the ritual led to the revelation that a "hidden ghost" had been present since the firm's founding and to which it was intimately connected. The late founder had himself been haunted and saw the creation of the family firm as a way to keep alive his own private memories of his daughter, who died when she was just a few days old. He passed this secret ghost on to his son, now the firm's leader, who then revealed the existence of his sister so as to complete the business's handover. "My father passed down to me this intimate way of viewing the firm, as if it's a sibling of mine. I was and continue to be the conduit for the socio-emotional burden associated with this metaphor. Once the veil had been lifted, this family secret undeniably brought the members of the firm closer together and built trust" [Hervé Colas].

The pitch competition was a one-off event, which only increased its specialness and its legendary mark on the firm. Those who took part in the planning of the competition and who attended it are now able to pass on the firm's story and secrets to its new members. The latter group experience the event through the various remarkable stories told by living participants, and which implicitly communicate the values held by the firm and its founder.

Discussion

This section touches on our paper's theoretical contributions and contributions to the field of management, as well as its limitations and the opportunities it opens up for future research.

Theoretical contributions

From a theoretical standpoint, this paper confirms the typology put forward by Bazin and Leclair (2019) on the many, complex and ambiguous "organisational ghosts" that can be approached by way of the "epistemic ghost conveying an untold secret" and the "ethical spectre embodying an otherness to be embraced". Indeed, the notion of an untold secret is present here, particularly through the spinning top game which historically symbolises an activity that serves as a ruse to communicate secrets or emotions. The notion of a secret is also obvious in the revelation of a hidden ghost whose presence brought about the firm's existence. Additionally, our case study confirms the notion of a spectral ethics and otherness that we internalise and have contact with through this artificial and personal maieutic exercise described by several of our interviewees.

This paper goes beyond a mere confirmation of Bazin and Leclair's typology given that it describes strategic practices integrating "organisational ghosts". To the best of our knowledge, this has never been studied as in depth through a real-world case study and a first-hand account. Our paper is unusual in that it covers a case study involving the lead author who also runs his family's firm, allowing him to discuss and analyse strategic management practices – whether conscious or unconscious, but acknowledged after the fact – that draw on "organisational ghosts".

This paper demonstrates that the firm in question has a commemorative aspect which is both voluntary (the late leader envisioned his firm as an organisational entity that preserved the memory of his deceased daughter) and unconscious (the new leader was not initially aware of the burden of memory within the firm), and which sometimes is used consciously (the new leader worked remembrance into the firm's strategic management practices).

Regarding the literature on the phenomena of the lingering "presence" of founding leaders after their death and the literature on the concept of commemorative rituals and other specific forms of organisational remembrance, this paper provides a space for these works to dialogue with one another, show their complementary nature and, above all, how they can be put into practice. This paper shows that, if we recognise the importance of the traces left behind by late leaders, then we should also seriously consider the ability possessed by certain of their survivors to evoke and make use of these traces to their advantage in their business. This ability can be exercised in a strictly private context, but it may also be expressed publicly through full-fledged organisational rituals. Our paper thus brings together and demonstrates the practical applications of three theoretical fields, the cross-cutting impacts and complementary aspects of which deserve to be further examined by organisational researchers.

Contributions to the field of management

From a managerial perspective, this paper serves as a useful reference point for all leaders, especially those of family businesses, who have to coexist with the traces and "ghosts" of their deceased predecessors. Our paper provides a real-world example of this phenomenon at work in a family business. Given how difficult it is to obtain accounts from people on this topic, this paper is already a valuable contribution to the field. People are hesitant to discuss the deceased with honesty and transparency, particularly when the dead remain present as "organisational ghosts". Additionally, this paper recounts how a leader attempted to understand and make use of the traces of one such ghost to ensure the success of the handover of his family's business.

The pitch competition was devised as an offering made to honour the memory of the late leader – a symbolic sacrifice for the "organisational ghost". This offering amounted to money, a trophy, a competition and even an award named after the late leader. This event served

to secure the firm's identity, long-term future and sound footing, and communicate the fact that it was not for sale. Far from posing a threat to the firm's existence, the founder's death strengthened the business in that it created a new intangible asset for it to make full use of: the "organisational ghost" of its late leader.

Other business leaders experiencing similar circumstances to those outlined in our case study could use it to guide their own response to such lingering "presences". This paper helps to show that this phenomenon is real and useful in the field of management, as it has practical applications.

This paper highlights in particular the way a "ghost" can be publicly and collectively evoked, embraced and promoted. Our case study calls on leaders to go public about their connection to the deceased and to regard it as an intangible asset that the organisation can treasure and nurture.

Limitations and opportunities for future research

One of our paper's limitations is that it is based on a single case study. Future research should integrate comparative analyses of several case studies involving the examination of the traces and the commemorative rituals of late leaders. However, although the particular situation studied in this paper may seem frequent, its analysis by organisational researchers is a rarity. This is likely due to how difficult it is to obtain first-hand accounts from people on such a private, and to a certain extent, sacred matter. It is no easy task to discuss the deceased with organisational researchers, and even less so when the dead are still present, in some shape or form, in the organisation.

Moreover, our case study is focused on a positive "organisational ghost" who had a beneficial impact on his organisation. Future research could try to analyse other types of "organisational ghosts", particularly those having left behind a more controversial imprint and legacy, or those whose evocation could potentially serve as a model to avoid in their organisation.

Lastly, as is the case of any autoethnographic approach, this paper poses the risk of a lack of neutrality in the field. This risk has, however, been mitigated by thorough efforts to triangulate sources, as well as by the involvement of an outside co-author with objectivity vis-à-vis the field and who did not know the deceased individuals before they died.

Conclusion

In this paper, we describe and analyse how a leader of a family business secured its independence and future by tapping into the literature on (i) the lingering "presence" of founding leaders after their death, (ii) the concept of commemorative rituals and (iii) other specific forms of organisational remembrance.

From a theoretical standpoint, this paper confirms the typology put forward by Bazin and Leclair (2019) on "organisational ghosts", and goes further by examining

strategic practices integrating this concept and the literature that inspired it.

From a managerial perspective, this paper serves as a useful reference point for all leaders, especially those of family businesses, who coexist with the traces and "ghosts" of their deceased predecessors. This paper shows that the latter can represent an intangible asset that the organisation can integrate concretely into its strategic practices.

This paper is a starting point for other work in this exciting field and can be of use to the organisational research community and to practitioners.

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How Many Waste Collectors Behind the Dustcart?: When the Reality of Working Conditions Ruins a Manager's Cost-Cutting Dreams[1]

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.The concept of age management is proving unable to prevent the exclusion of ageing workers – chiefly for health reasons – from the labour market. Our research paper examines this issue through the lens of a new idea we refer to as occupational health-driven employability and career path management and focuses specifically on the waste collection profession. We conducted a study to understand the consequences of a specific managerial decision (the switch from a two-person to a one-person crew of waste collectors) on working conditions. The participation of a physiologist and an ergonomist gave us the opportunity to recommend improvements to the managerial approach to such decision-making. This unorthodox multidisciplinary approach allowed us to show that while it may be tempting for managers to introduce cost rationalisation measures, the latter have material consequences for working conditions – even for the health of waste collectors. When presented with our paper's results, the manager/contract giver took on the role of an occupational health and safety (OHS) officer during a call for tenders, demonstrating that the two worlds of the manager and the OHS officer can overlap.

Introduction

For three decades now, the increase in life expectancy due to population ageing has prompted major concern rather than celebration, as this demographic shift runs the risk of creating a social security shortfall (Rocard, 1991). Since the 1990s, each new French government has tried to turn pensioners into contributors and taken a host of measures to raise the retirement age. This is why they have extensively promoted an actionable concept – age management – which is supposed to allow businesses to put the government's pension policy into practice.[2]

In 2020, however, there was little to show for all these efforts. Although the employment rate for workers aged 55 to 64 did increase, mainly as an automatic consequence of reforms to raise the retirement age, to 52.1% in 2018 compared to less than 30% at the start of the 2000s, it remains low in comparison to that of other countries – 61.4% for all OECD nations (Bellon, Meriaux and Soussan, 2020; Dares, 2011). Furthermore, studies assessing the impact of the 2010 pension reform show that there has been an explosion in forms of unemployment and underemployment and in the number of vulnerable workers receiving social protection benefits, especially long-term unemployment benefits (Dubois and Koubi, 2017; Unedic, 2016) but also disability pensions (with roughly 80,000 recipients added between end-2010 and end-2014 (COR, 2017)). The number of sick leave days taken jumps significantly with age – amounting to an average of 52 days for people aged 55 to 59, 76 days for those over 60 – whereas the average number of sick leave days taken is 35 among the general population (Cnam, 2018).

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In light of the persistent issue of older jobseekers being forced out of the labour market and the scale of these challenges, by examining age management through an international literature review (Salmon and Juban, 2018; Salmon, 2019; Salmon et al., 2022), we were able to identify that the concept does not sufficiently take into account how an ageing workforce impacts occupational health. This is despite the fact that a worker's continued employment is contingent in part on their health status (France Stratégie policy institute, 2018). Other researchers are more categorical: "Health status is the single most important factor 'pushing' people out of work and reducing the likelihood that they will return" (Phillipson and Smith, 2005).

To address this state of affairs, we use the concept of occupational health-driven employability and career path management (GEPaST) (Salmon et al., 2020; Salmon and Juban, 2021; Salmon et al., 2022). Developed in order to put health back at the centre of discussion, GEPaST considers a person's employability as contingent on their getting a job that is "satisfactory" from a health perspective, meaning one that allows them to not only avoid damaging their health, but to build a healthy lifestyle. Health is thus understood, as Canguilhem puts it, as an "increase in the normative power of the individual" (Canguilhem, [1984]-2002). GEPaST is based on the fundamental premise that all stakeholders involved in devising human resources management (HRM) practices have a role to play in managing occupational health and ageing, including by restoring flexibility for workers, even when their job involves all manner of constraints.

Against this backdrop, we received a request for assistance from a consulting engineer at Carsat.[3] This occupational health and safety (OHS) officer reached out to us due to his concerns about how an increasingly widespread management practice was impacting the health of waste collectors. Waste collection crews were downsized from one driver and two collectors (two-person collection) to crews of one driver and one collector (one-person collection).

When the OHS officer asked us to document the consequences of this downsizing of crews on the working conditions of the employees, it gave us the opportunity to bridge the worlds of OHS officers and managers (the latter being in this case contract givers). When it comes to the subcontracting of waste collection services, contract givers have an especially valuable position given their wide latitude of action, including over several firms (subcontractors) at once. Consequently, contract givers are essential players in a GEPaST approach.

Our story is about waste collectors. It tells of a conflict between, on one side, managers who are tempted to rationalise costs (by switching to one-person collection) and the material consequences of such a decision on the working conditions and health of waste collectors. We opted to examine this situation by conducting a multidisciplinary intervention research study. The results of our research have led the contract giver,

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[3] French retirement and occupational health insurance fund.

in the course of a call for tenders, to wear the hat of an OHS officer, thereby proving that the management and OHS worlds are not perfectly separate.

Waste collectors: the most familiar of strangers

Everyone is familiar with waste collectors. They drive by our houses early in the morning or late in the evening, and ring our doorbells once a year in December for the holidays. But do we know exactly what their daily work involves? To try to understand, we hopped aboard a dustcart and observed a number of complete routes over several days. Since the best way to learn is by doing, one of us even rode at the rear of the dustcart and realised, over the course of a few days, that we did not know how to collect waste. Later on, once we had a more in-depth experience of what the work is like, we thought about its characteristics, both on the business and the work environment front, only to reach the conclusion that the duties of the job are both complex and interlinked.

Hard streets

At 4am, the dustcart is revving up. I woke up at 2:30am, a little dazed because I had slept poorly, as I wasn't used to going to bed at 6:30pm. It's the third consecutive day of my observation of the waste collection route, and I had been warned that I would "feel jetlagged". Of course, my husband is the one who dropped the kids off at school this morning. In the cab, I'm talking to the driver, Stéphane, while we watch on the screen the waste collectors behind the vehicle. The route begins in the city and we come to a stop every few metres. Since every minute counts, the collectors jump off the rear step, push and haul in the containers, and then run to get back onto the step. My research colleague, who is trying a hand at the job of waste collector for the day, is struggling to keep up the pace and to stay in sync with the regular collector, as he frequently ends up in the dustcart's blind spot, or worse, behind the vehicle altogether, creating a safety hazard. Fortunately, our hosts are patient and courteous.

On this part of the route, household waste is collected from containers, so the work is straightforward. In other areas, where elected officials do not want to run the risk of blighting the streets with rubbish bins or rustling the feathers of constituents who do not have room to store them, a variety of non-standard containers are used, whether bags or boxes, according to the residents' fancies. Unable to use the automatic bin lifter for these methods of disposal, the collectors wear out their shoulders throwing the bags and boxes above the hopper. The exact same procedure is used to collect green waste: there isn't anything worse than having to pick up big reusable bags stuffed with mowed grass, grass water and rainwater that have been sitting out for four days!

By around 8:30am, the crew is under pressure. They've fallen somewhat behind schedule and pull up to a school at the worst possible time: children

are running from all directions and the moms who are behind the wheel are grumbling. "To them, since we pick up crap we are crap", Stéphane mutters. As some children laugh, Stéphane smiles faintly and continues: "When we're collecting and pass by kids and all that, it's true that it makes us chuckle because kids cry out 'Aaahhh!' and hold their noses because we stink, you know. The dustcart reeks. The collector behind the vehicle has their nose shoved in it. From a health and safety point of view, it's not great at all, but we don't have a choice, it goes with the territory of this line of work". The children are dwarfed by the containers and the dustcart has loads of blind spots, making the location dangerous. The crew works quickly and leaves the area promptly.

Next we're on a two-lane, narrow road. But, what on earth are the waste collectors doing now? They glance quickly at the road and cross it to go pick up the bags on the other side. "Well now Stéphane, that's bilateral collection, which is prohibited, they could get hit by a car driving in the opposite direction!" I observe. Patiently Stéphane explains to me that I'm right and that they are supposed to turn around at the roundabout and come back in the opposite direction, but that doing so would cause them to lose time they can't afford to waste.

As we move into a rural area, the collections become more sporadic. Noticing on the screen that the collector appears to be surrounded by a thick cloud of grey smoke, I suddenly ask Stéphane about it. "That? That's nothing, it's February, that's chimney ash! There's worse! Sometimes, a motor oil container has ended up at the very bottom of the hopper, and then the shovel crushes part of it and you hear a crunching noise followed by "pshh!" It spurts out behind the dustcart! This can happen with oil, crap and so on… you have to get to the side, you don't want to be in front of that! I'll tell you, it happened to us one time, someone had emptied their septic tank into the waste container, but we managed to avoid the contents getting in our faces! People throw away anything and everything".

Feeling somewhat uncomfortable, I get back to my list of questions. And what about cold weather? Today it's negative 5°C outside. "Oh, when you're dressed warm enough, this kind of weather is okay. But in the summer, it's awful, maggots are in the rubbish and it shakes like so. Even with gloves on, you have to think twice about how to grab the bin without crushing too many of them!" Stéphane tells us, laughing. "But ultimately, the worst weather is rain. If we get rained on at the beginning of our route, we're soaking wet for the next eight hours".

At noon, we're getting close to the end of the route, which was a short one. Even so, Joël, the regular collector, walks with difficulty, as though he was wearing a spacesuit. "Him?" Stéphane says, sighing. "Well, he has knee problems. Romain has back problems. That's because X, their previous employer, didn't collect rubbish in containers. At X, they were picking up bags. They were lifting 12 to 13 tonnes of loose waste. As a two-person crew. On one route, per day. 12 to 13 tonnes. And 95% of that was loose waste. Big black bags. That's why

they're falling apart, you see. Collecting loose waste for 10 years like that, that kills a man. They were working at an insane pace, with hours that were… and now Joël's knees are ruined". And when I ask Joël's age, Stéphane responds: "He's 45".

An old, straightforward-seeming profession facing highly topical issues
Behind the seemingly straightforward act of depositing the contents of a waste container into a dustcart, lies a complex system of organisation, at the level of waste collection companies and their operational environment. Consequently, the management of the waste collection profession, which tends to be portrayed in an exaggerated, old-fashioned way and which everyone thinks they know about, looks straightforward on the surface, but it is anything but.

A complex system of organisation at every level
The organisation of waste collection services is made complex by the high level of variability inherent in the business, as well as by the plethora of external factors placing constraints on companies.

Firstly, the collection of household waste is an intrinsically variable business in many respects: route density (with the largest volume of waste generated at Christmas), seasonality (green waste), weather conditions, road conditions and interactions with the public. This makes the profession very hard to make predictive models about at company level, as Stéphane explains: "On the computer, everything always looks fine, it doesn't show the different hazards of the job, like a car that's blocking the way or slippery road conditions. Last Monday, there was a ton of snow and we couldn't service certain roads because it was too dangerous. The dustcart couldn't get up the streets, so we didn't do them until the next day, as we always try to come back to do them. But all those hazards, well, the computer doesn't take them into account".

Secondly, waste management companies are operating in a highly competitive environment, a fact that is ever-present in the managerial mindset given that the sector is largely unprofitable. And yet calls for tenders are launched at frequent intervals, every three, five or seven years. Furthermore, we have been told that new competitors have emerged alongside the incumbent operators. The especially aggressive practices of the former have unsettled the latter: "In the event, competitor X is taking on a lot of contracts right now in mere financial terms and is lowering prices, but the company is getting many contracts because it is going to get bought up shortly, and what they're interested in is having as many contracts and vehicles as possible in order to have an acquisition cost that's… [and] to make loads of money. They don't care about anything else. They have planned their acquisition for [such year]… so up until [such year] they're going to deliberately undercut prices on the market in order to get a maximum number of contracts, no matter if they are loss-making. And they don't care if they push their workers to the brink physically. Their employees are paid bottom wages and aren't eligible for overtime pay. They couldn't care less"

(as told to us by an operations manager). Companies will also undercut prices in order to get a loss-making waste collection contract that they can take over and make up for the financial losses by operating in other profitable areas of business, such as waste sorting and recovery: "I want region X, so I position myself at below-market prices, and regardless of the cost, I sweep up everything, because beyond waste collection I have processing and other sorting and recovery operations, so on the whole… the dustcarts take care of my advertising, and I'm able to make money with the rest of my business activities. Collection allows me to merely bring in tonnes of waste that I can make money off of later down the chain" (account provided by an operations manager).

Thirdly, waste collection is part of a fast-evolving environment where a range of issues collide. In particular, decisions associated with the green transition are having an impact. When a public decision-maker invests in a new recycling channel and users change their sorting habits, the type, flow and volume of waste end up being affected, which in turn impact the day-to-day existence of waste collectors. Another example: a decision to tax users based on the weight of the waste they dispose of leads to changes for collectors, including the arrival of closed, microchipped bins, the use of IT equipment and new sources of tension with the public.

A profession that is neither anachronistic nor trivial
Despite its long existence and outdated image, the waste collection profession isn't an exception or even an anachronism. V. Pueyo and S. Volkoff warn of the risk of considering it as such. In fact, they remark that certain optimistic perspectives assume that three previously announced developments have been made a reality (Boissonnat, 1995): (i) a digitalisation of operations – meaning a reduction in the main physical constraints and difficulties; (ii) a revamp of how the work is organised in order to eliminate the repetitive nature of it and to give workers more flexibility in managing their time; and (iii) an increase in qualifications, coupled with a decrease in forms of subordination. However, these general predictions have not come to pass based on our observations of collectors on the job. Statistical field surveys conducted on a workforce-wide basis do not back up these predictions either (Pueyo and Volkoff, 2011). Persistent physical constraints, tighter time constraints, interactions with the public that cause direct or indirect pressure, as well as the highly topical complexity of the chains of accountability on which quality of life in the workplace depends, mean that these authors consider the waste collection profession and waste collection more broadly as "having the features of a modern-day job".

A profession in which the managerial approach has a role to play
T. Morlet discusses the results of a study conducted in 2008 and 2009 and overseen by social partners in the waste sector, in response to recommendations made by the French Agency for the Improvement of Working Conditions (Anact) with the aim of reducing occupational health risks and improving working conditions

in the sector (Morlet, 2011). These recommendations included incorporating OHS criteria in agreements between waste collection companies and local authorities, as well as organising work by implementing safer scheduling practices, rest time, manageable workloads, etc. The results of the study are clear: "The physiological approach is proving insufficient. The existence of technical and institutional measures intended to limit or reduce the occupational health risks faced by waste collectors is not proving as effective as might be hoped. Indeed, such measures too often overlook the tangible aspects of the work environment or of decision-making processes". As management researchers, we feel justified in responding to the request we received from a Carsat OHS officer.

Scope of research and methodology

"Unfortunately, our competitors use one-person collection crews as a way to undercut prices. We experienced this with one of our contracts; a company responded to a call for tenders with a proposal for one-person collection, which undercut prices very quickly, but a quality work environment and safety measures weren't in place for employees" (account provided by an operations manager).

Labour costs account for roughly 50% of waste collection costs. It is therefore easy to understand why the city managers and three private subcontractors are tempted to make the switch from a two-person to a one-person crew. Nevertheless, this change alarmed the Carsat OHS officer responsible for the region in question, prompting him to contact us to document its consequences on the working conditions, and ultimately the health, of collectors.

One-person collection: a gold mine for managers, a cause for concern for OHS officers and a nightmare for collectors?
Facing a highly competitive environment, all the managers working for this region are, or already have been, thinking about resorting to one-person crews, which appear to be the favoured solution to lower the main adjustment variable of waste collection costs: labour costs. Used as a way to stand out during the tender process, it can take several different forms in practice, some of which overlap one another.

Forcing through one-person crews
"Being competitive is a must. Right now we have other contracts to bid on and we don't know what to do anymore, you know, because we're thinking that if we put in a bid with a one-person crew, then maybe we'll get it, but the guys are going to get burnt out, as they already clock a lot of hours. If we don't put in a bid with a one-person crew, we'll lose out on the contract… […] When it comes to the switch to one-person waste collection, they've kind of perceived it as inevitable, in other words, 'At any rate, we know that everyone is going that route'" (account provided by an operations manager).

A somewhat marginal/informal/systematic work organisation:

Work schedules:

"After submitting our draft contract for the call for tenders and being awarded the contract, we had a preparatory phase during which we could still change the work schedules, so at that point we communicated with each crew, saying to them: 'OK, you're going to do this, does that seem reasonable to you or not?'" (in the words of an operations manager);

Routes:

"They took out certain neighbourhoods, for example for three dustcarts they took out three neighbourhoods, and assigned them to another dustcart, so basically they relieved us a bit. They tried to redesign the routes a little. But in my experience, the route that I'm doing today hasn't been changed at all. It's the same as it's always been, all the more so that it's a rural route. Rural areas are constantly being built up, and the more time goes by, the longer the route gets. At some point, they're going to have to do something about it. So far, they've just taken away one guy and left the route as is. And said, quote-unquote: 'Deal with it'" (as recounted to us by a driver);

Improved teamwork between drivers and the collectors working alone:

"The drivers are supposed to get out of the dustcart and help out. They don't always stay behind the wheel. When there's a ton of bins, when there's a big building to do, the drivers come give the collectors a hand" (account from a local manager).

Self-regulation

One company negotiated, without being legally required to do so, an internal agreement governing one-person waste collection: "This agreement stipulates, for example, that a collector working alone cannot collect more than nine tonnes of green waste" (as told to us by a human resources director). In addition, informal self-regulation is in place: "After collectors reach a certain age, we can't require them to work in a one-person configuration" (according to a site manager). This same manager explained that his in-depth familiarity with the job's demands on the ground have occasionally pushed him to refuse to allow one-person collection on certain routes due to the tonnage involved, geographical constraints and even feedback from the collectors performing the routes.

Endeavouring to reach a 'win-win' negotiation

"All sorts of accommodations could be made to their working conditions. In cases where we can't pay them extra, we could say to them: 'You'll work 30 hours instead of 35 hours per week', meaning that the harsher working conditions would be offset by a decrease in their work hours. […] The easiest thing would be to give them a bonus for working solo, but that's difficult to do, or to tell them: 'Your shift will end earlier or you'll work a day less'. In a way, we benefit from this way of operating, since we have just one collector on a route, and the employee also gets something out of it. It's win-win. I think that's the heart of the matter" (account from a city waste management director).

The use of collectors working alone is objectively on the rise. However, its consequences on waste collectors' working conditions have not been assessed objectively, and this is even less the case for its potential consequences on their health. As for the effectiveness of all the accommodations mentioned thus far, to our knowledge, no study relevant to this matter has been conducted. Consequently, the Carsat OHS officer responsible for providing guidance to all these waste collection companies was met with the following problem: "I've been looking into one-person waste collection at this time. The deal is that this mode of working is becoming more widespread because it reduces costs, but it's used under the guise of risk prevention, with the reasoning being: 'Having a one-person collection crew avoids bilateral collection, and then it's also less dangerous because the collectors get less banged up by the containers. When they're working as a two-person crew, typically one of them goes to pull out the containers and pass them on to the other…'. It seems handling the containers can cause injuries. Let's assume that this is the case, but having said that, when I hear this reasoning, I say to myself that if one person does the same collection route solo that used to be done by two collectors, then that must make the job a whole lot harder. […] So I thought, we should think about this. All the more so that there's a safety officer here at Carsat who wanted to get an injunction against company X for 'improper use of one-person collection'. I said to him, 'Wait, I don't know if it's improper because if they've reorganised things so that it's acceptable, you can't call it improper. Now, if one collector is doing the same collection route that used to be done by two collectors, then we need to look into it, yes. But as for the impact on workers' health, you're making guesses, are you sure of them? So the other day I had a meeting with the city and I said to the partners in attendance: 'Don't you think we could put our heads together about this matter, rather than going it alone? I'm going to ask you to do it.'"

This multidisciplinary intervention research study grew out of this original working group, which met on the initiative of Carsat's external OHS officer and brought together the city's waste management officials and subcontractors, as well as other stakeholders interested in the issues under study (Cramif,[4] management centre, occupational health department, INRS[5]). The researchers therefore had access to four spheres: the city, itself the employer of the state-managed waste collectors, and the three private subcontractors with a public-service remit.

A difficult request, a multidisciplinary response, and an intervention research study with an original approach

The study's objectives were straightforward on the surface: "to suggest guidelines on implementing one-person waste collection crews while safeguarding employee health and safety". However, the Carsat OHS officer's request was difficult to address because it required comparing working conditions at a company

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[4] Regional health insurance fund for Ile-de-France.

[5] French Research and Safety Institute for the Prevention of Occupational Accidents and Diseases.

that used both one-person and two-person collection crews. But our partners in the industry planning to host the researchers told us that it was not feasible to have, for research purposes, two crews perform the same route, with one dustcart manned by a single collector and the other manned by two collectors. In fact, given the highly sensitive nature of the topic under study, they were hesitant about the social acceptability of the study. The working group thus set to work on developing an original intervention research protocol which also took into account each partner's constraints.

When conducting a review of the literature, we found that few resources covered one-person collection, as the waste collection profession has only been studied under conditions of two-person collection crews. We did, however, note that collectors face the same constraints regardless of the way in which they conduct their job. These include physical, technical, work environment and work organisation constraints (Bourdouxhe, Guertin and Cloutier, 1992). Furthermore, the literature identifies four types of regulation enabling these constraints to be adapted:

• self-regulation (Denis, St-Vincent, Gonella, Couturier and Trudeau, 2007): working methods (pre-empting, adapting) are derived from choices influenced by external factors. Collectors are constantly oscillating between practices that are "effort saving but hazardous" and "safe but exhausting";
• collective regulation (Gerrossier, Massardier, Pueyo and Germain, 2008): providing informal mutual assistance, evening out workloads, improving workflow, finding room for flexibility for oneself and the other collector, breaking the monotony, etc.;
• work organisation regulation in the broadest sense;
• external regulation (content of calls for tenders, legislation, etc.).

Given the wide range of possible constraints and types of regulation, the link that we were interested in establishing between managerial decision-making and working conditions, as well as the resources available to the INRS, we decided to address the complex matter of "switching to one-person collection" by featuring contrasting viewpoints. Accordingly, our research spanned four disciplines: physiology, ergonomics, economics and management.

Likewise, the intervention research protocol combined several research methods. The physiologist performed quantitative measurements in order to study the response of the human body to different sets of working conditions. The ergonomist observed how the collectors perform their job in order to highlight, among other things, the changes engendered by the above-mentioned types of regulation. In parallel, the economist and the manager conducted a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews that then underwent a conventional content analysis (Bardin, 2003; Berelson, 1952), with the software program NVivo being used to run partially automated data analyses that were interpreted by an analyst.

The approach involved several phases:

• designing a consensus-based research method with industry partners, in the context of the working group. This phase resulted in co-developing a scientifically sound method of comparing the routes performed by one-person and two-person collection crews. To this end, the industry partners mutually defined what they considered different but comparable routes performed by one-person and two-person collection crews, particularly with regard to their difficulty (which depends on many factors: type of waste or container(s), tonnage, mechanical assistance options, route duration, job duties, rural or urban collection);
• implementing the selected protocol;
• reporting and discussing the results with the rest of the working group: in this way, the results were tested against the knowledge of the stakeholders, thus lending legitimacy to the results.

Results

The four researchers from various disciplines carried out their work at the same time, on site at the offices of the government contract giver and the three private subcontractors. The measurements were carried out at the premises of the contract giver and two subcontractors, during existing routes under normal conditions, so as to avoid creating artificial conditions and to remain as close as possible to the realities on the ground. In all, 8 routes were studied in full by the ergonomist (observations, measurements, work activity reports, interviews with 10 collectors, 6 drivers and 4 driver-collectors) (Vieira, 2015). The physiologist monitored (via heart rate instruments and motion sensors) the workers performing identical routes: all told, 16 regular routes (10 performing one-person collection and 6 performing two-person collection) were studied, involving 37 workers (22 collectors: 10 performing one-person collection and 12 performing two-person collection; and 15 drivers: 9 working in a one-person collection configuration and 6 in a two-person collection configuration) (Desbrosses, Adam and Vieira, 2016; Desbrosses, Adam, Vieira and Gaudez, 2016). Drivers and collectors alike were studied, as some of the industry partners informed us that more teamwork was involved between drivers and collectors in a one-person collection setting, thereby easing the single collector's workload: it was a matter ripe for research.

In parallel, the economist and the manager conducted 19 semi-structured interviews at the premises of the contract giver and the three subcontractors: 15 one-on-one interviews and 4 group interviews, with a total of 25 people interviewed (12 managers, 1 secretary from the Health, Safety and Working Conditions Committee (CHSCT), 3 internal OHS officers, 6 waste collection crewmembers, 3 HR personnel members) (Delecroix et al., 2017; Salmon, 2019). The remaining phase involved comparing and contrasting the various approaches in an effort to establish a link between managerial decision-making and its consequences on the ground.
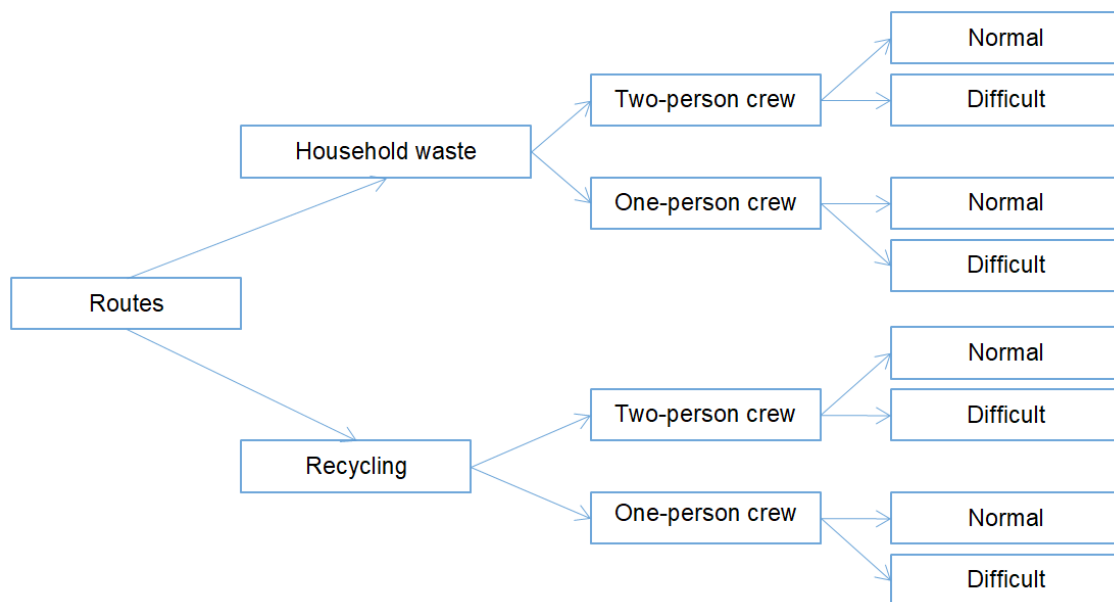
Figure 1: Diagram of routes monitored by the ergonomist and the physiologist to ensure the highest methodological rigour.

Quantified measurements pointed to the changes to working conditions brought on by the switch to one-person collection, as well as their consequences on the human body

The switch to one-person collection tangibly impacted working conditions

The physiologist's measurements underscored the differences in the amount of work performed by collectors in a one-person configuration compared to those working as a two-person crew, on the routes studied (see Table 1 below):

The ergonomist's results showed the changes to collectors' working conditions when performing their job in a one-person collection configuration. The ergonomist compared three minutes of work activity of two collectors, this time period being chosen randomly at the start of the route: a three-minute sequence for a one-person crew and for a two-person crew. This data was retrieved through live coding with the software program Captiv, which performs ergonomics analyses of work activity. (Figure 2)

The work was completed in rapid succession, with no task ever taking longer than 20 seconds. The collector dumped two containers in three minutes. The work involved pre-collection: either one of the collectors ran ahead of the dustcart in order to get the containers

|	Two-person crew (two collectors behind dustcart)	One-person crew (single collector)	Change
Waste collection route time (in minutes, average ± standard deviation)	401 ± 48	434 ± 90	⬆
Average break time (in minutes, average ± standard deviation)	33 ± 12	26 ± 8	⬇
Average weight of waste collected by each collector (in tonnes, average ± standard deviation)	4.7 ± 0.6	9.6 ± 2.2	⬆
Number of steps taken by each collector (average ± standard deviation)	12,238 ± 3,702	16,599 ± 4,865	⬆
Average route length (in km, average ± standard deviation)	44.6 ± 8.6	58.3 ± 18.4	⬆
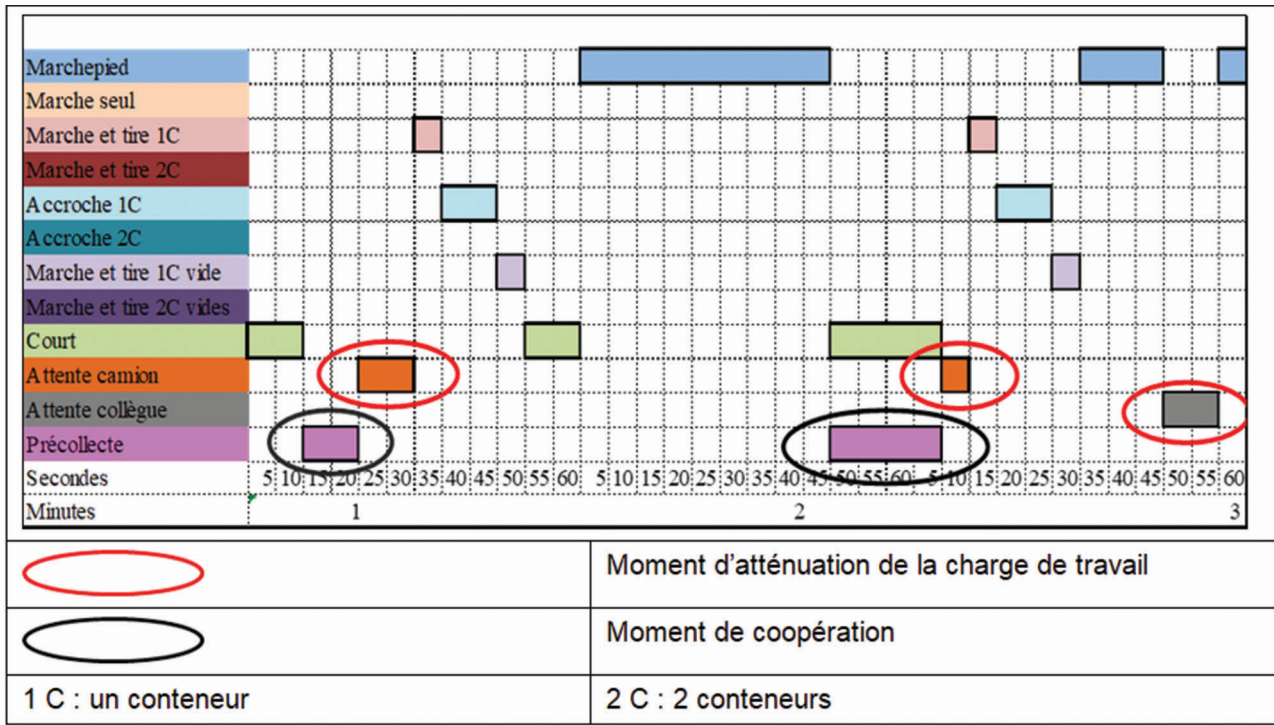
Figure 2: Work activity report 1. Work of a collector in a two-person configuration on a "difficult" household waste route (route duration: 6 hours and 14 minutes).

Légende :

Marchepied : Riding on rear step

Marche seul : Walking only

Marche et tire 1 C : Walking and hauling 1 C

Marche et tire 2 C : Walking and hauling 2 C

Accroche 1 C : Dumping 1 C

Accroche 2 C : Dumping 2 C

Marche et tire 1 C vide : Walking and hauling 1 C (empty)

Marche et tire 2 C vides : Walking and hauling 2 C (empty)

Court : Running

Attente camion : Waiting on dustcart

Attente collègue : Waiting on workmate

Précollecte : Pre-collection

Secondes : Seconds

Minutes : Minutes

ready and round them up, or the collectors handled one out of two containers, so that while one was emptying a container, the other could run ahead to the next container and wait for the vehicle to arrive before dumping the container when it was their turn. This form of teamwork resulted in brief but welcome periods in which the workers were waiting on the dustcart or their workmate: "Short downtime like that also gives us a break."

Everything changed when the switch was made to one-person collection.(Figure 3

The collector working alone ended up dumping six containers in three minutes, i.e. four more than the two-person crew described in work activity report 1. On two occasions, the collector was seen dumping two containers at the same time, demonstrating an attempt to use time-saving techniques. In addition, the single collector was no longer able to take advantage of the lower-effort periods afforded by the teamwork-based practice of pre-collection. Nor could he take advantage of other common teamwork practices, such as receiving help to handle a heavy container and switching sides during the route.

Changes to working conditions had repercussions on the human body

The switch to one-person collection, which put greater demands on the human body, changed the human body's response to these work-related demands. The physiologist noted a significant increase in waste collectors' total cardiac cost. As the difference between the heart rate during work and recovery, it represents the "additional work" the heart does to support physical effort. Exceeding the threshold of 30 beats per minute is an indicator of excessive cardiac strain (Meyer, 1996). The physiologist observed that average total cardiac cost was already high for collectors working in a two-person configuration (28.8 ± 10.2 beats per minute). The switch to one-person collection resulted in an even higher total cardiac cost (38.8 ± 10.5 bpm), clearly putting collectors in a state of excessive cardiac strain. (Figure 4)

| | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 | 60 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 | 60 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 | 60 |
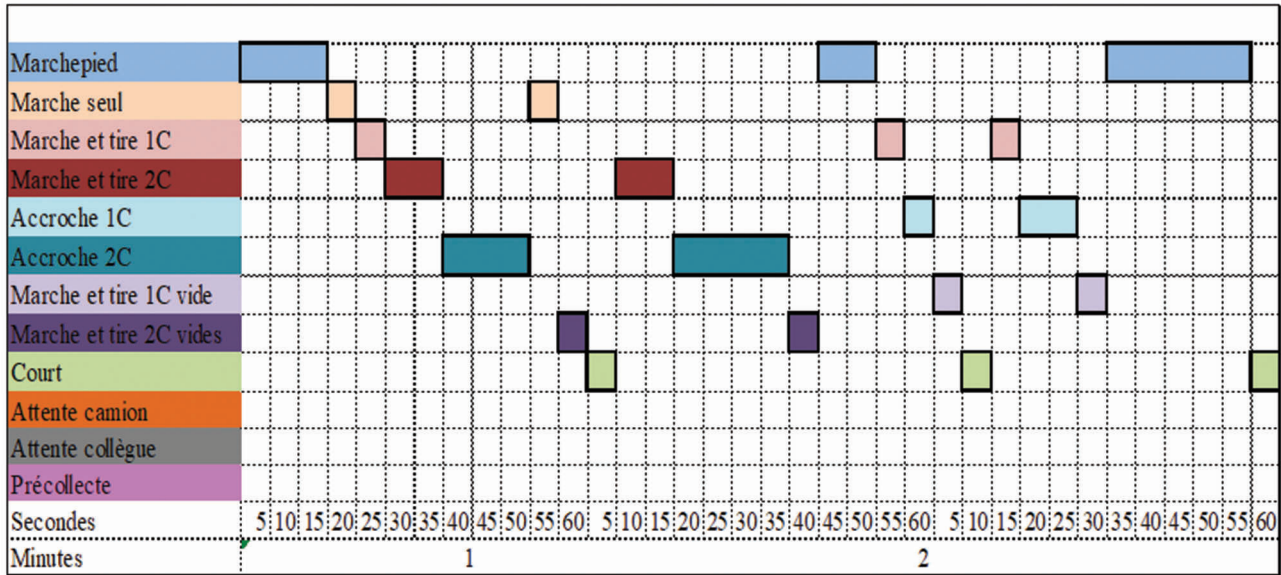
Figure 3: Work activity report 2. Work of a collector in a one-person configuration on a "normal" household waste route (route duration: 8 hours and 37 minutes).

Légende :

Marchepied : Riding on rear step

Marche seul : Walking only

Marche et tire 1 C : Walking and hauling 1 C

Marche et tire 2 C : Walking and hauling 2 C

Accroche 1 C : Dumping 1 C

Accroche 2 C : Dumping 2 C

Marche et tire 1 C vide : Walking and hauling 1 C (empty)

Marche et tire 2 C vides : Walking and hauling 2 C (empty)

Court : Running

Attente camion : Waiting on dustcart

Attente collègue : Waiting on workmate

Précollecte : Pre-collection

Secondes : Seconds

Minutes : Minutes

Figure 4: Total cardiac cost increased for collectors working as a one-person crew versus a two-person crew.

The trade-offs expected by the waste collection industry did not pan out

When asked about the possible increase in demands on workers due to the switch to one-person collection, industry members advanced two major types of argument:

• the routes had been adjusted to ease employees' workload;
• there was greater teamwork between drivers and the collectors working alone: drivers would get out of the cab more often to help collectors.

The first argument was refuted by the results outlined above and the physiologist disproved the second argument. The physiologist's findings showed that the drivers studied spent the same amount of time in a seated position regardless of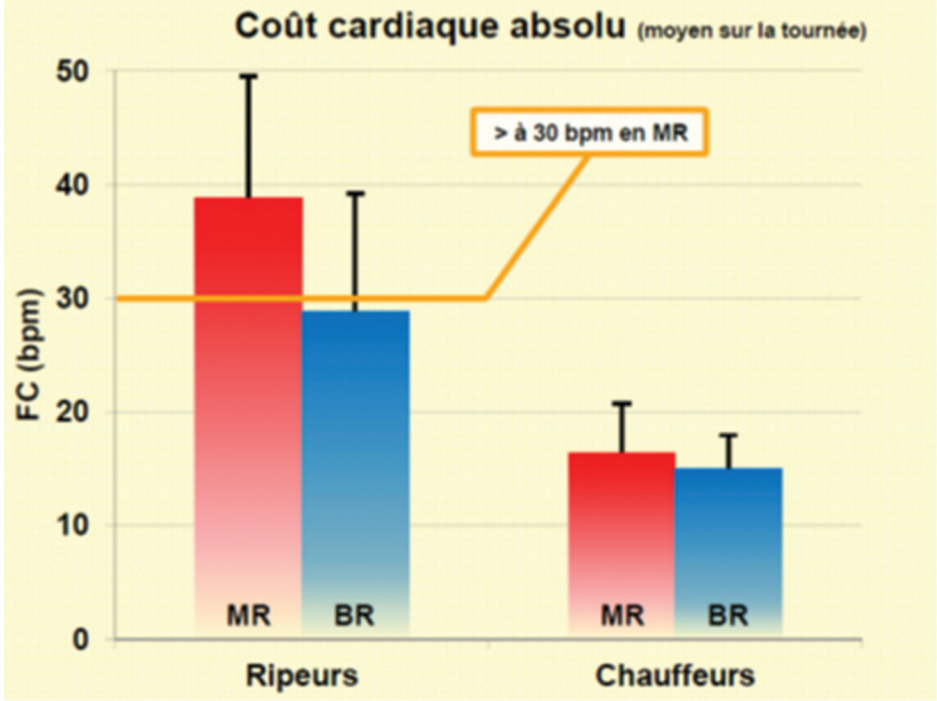 working with a one-person or a two-person collection crew (86% of working hours, ± 8.4%). In addition, there was no significant difference in drivers' total cardiac cost from one type of collection to the other (16.4 ± 4.2 bpm and 15.0 ± 2.8 bpm, for one-person and two-person collection, respectively).

These results make sense. After all, the possibility for the driver to exit the cab to help the single collector depends not only on the driver's willingness, but on how the route is. To go help the collector, the driver has to bring the dustcart to a stop, apply the handbrake, climb down from the cab, go to the rear of the vehicle, handle the containers, get back in the cab and restart the vehicle. Such a time-consuming effort is only profitable when there is a collection point where many containers are gathered in one spot, for example at the bottom of a block of flats. It is not feasible for just one or two containers. However, these factors have not changed with the switch to one-person collection: drivers do not have more opportunities to go help a one-person collector than they do a two-person crew, even if their managers have asked them to do so.

Combining quantitative and qualitative analysis: producing quantitative data provided the missing link between managerial decision-making and the health of waste collectors

The physiological analysis data on physical workload revealed, for one-person collection, 10% longer working hours, a two-fold higher weight of waste collected per collector, and an amount of steps and a cardiac cost that are 35% higher than those of a two-person crew. The findings of the ergonomics analysis showed the disappearance of a large number of the teamwork-based possibilities for managing constraints, as well as the emergence of time-saving techniques in order to be able to keep up with the new demands of work.

These results ultimately demonstrate that the switch to one-person collection contributes to the deterioration of every dimension of health. Firstly, it reduces the flexibility collectors have to carry out their job, damaging health as it is defined by Canguilhem (1984). Secondly, the results of the physiological measurements underscore that one-person collection is physically more intense than two-person collection

under the conditions observed. Collectors are therefore at higher risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders and excessive cardiac strain, suggesting a deterioration of somatic health in both the medium and short term.

By combining a quantitative and a qualitative approach, we have established a link between the managerial decision to switch to one-person collection and the deterioration of every dimension of waste collectors' health. The route adjustments and the driver-collector teamwork dynamic touted by managers are clearly unable to make up for the increased demands collectors face when working in a one-person configuration.

These circumstances are a far cry from the "win-win" deal envisioned by some. Let's face it: the managers' arguments do not reflect the collectors' day-to-day experience on the job. Those who did not at first necessarily want to face the reality of the working conditions for one-person collectors can no longer look the other way.

Discussion: when managers wear the hat of an OHS officer

In keeping with our initial commitment, the results of the work conducted by the physiologist and the ergonomist were discussed before the working group. Given that the research method was developed collectively and that the terms of reference were vetted, the soundness of the results was not up for debate. At most, it was pointed out that the observations were made based on a certainly limited sample and certainly singular waste collection routes. That said, the concordance of the results obtained by the physiologist and the ergonomist through the use of many and varied measurement methods as well as the significant number of routes and crewmembers observed in total, quickly drowned out any objections.

With the soundness of the results established, managers were shocked by the revelation of the consequences of their decisions for their employees' health. Some even approached us discreetly outside of the working group meetings to make sure that such and such particularly alarming heart rate curve did not belong to one of their employees.

After the initial wave of shock, it was time to do some soul-searching. Our study showed that one-person collection dramatically increased the demands of an already difficult job while all but eliminating the first two types of regulation available to waste collectors, i.e. self-regulation and collective regulation. This left just two other types: work organisation regulation and external regulation. As part of the intervention research study, the working group began to think about how to implement these remaining forms of regulation.

The response of the city, itself the employer of the state-managed waste collectors (local government civil servants), was straightforward and swift: although it had been considering introducing one-person collection under a "win-win" agreement, hence its interest in taking part in our study, the city decided, at least for the

time being, to scrap these plans. It should be noted, however, that this decision is made possible by the fact that the city finances itself; it does not compete for funding. Even if this option is open to the city, it involves foregoing substantial savings and making trade-offs.

In contrast, this radical form of work organisation regulation seems out of reach for private subcontractors, who must find another solution. During our interviews, all the people we spoke to were unanimous in calling for contract givers to implement the fourth type of regulation, external regulation: "The solution consists of levelling the playing field for everybody by lightly regulating the competitive bidding process. To a certain extent it's the only possible course of action, because if a player squeezes out the competition with an underpriced bid, my point is that a company has to get by and the other bidders have no choice but to fall in line, however well-meaning they may be…" (as recounted to us by a site manager). In the context of our intervention research study, it is again the contract giver, in this case the city, that would need to take action. It turned out that the end of our intervention research study coincided with the end of a contract, with the drafting of specifications for a new call for tenders. In the new specifications, the city introduced a clause restricting the use of one-person collection crews by subcontractors to certain clearly defined situations. Of course, this decision implies new financial efforts on the part of the city, with city managers being well aware that the proposed bids from potential subcontractors will be less competitive than if the subcontractors were not restricted in their use of one-person collection crews. Nevertheless, the city stands by this decision, as it protects waste collectors working for any of the city's subcontractors from the unregulated practice of one-person collection for the next five years.

Conclusion

Covering the same subject through the lens of four different disciplines, our intervention research study was focused on producing quantitative data to understand how the switch to one-person collection impacts working conditions. By combining a quantitative and a qualitative approach, our study has established a link, one that has rarely been so clearly demonstrated, between managerial decision-making and the constraints imposed on the bodies of the waste collection crewmembers involved. In addition, our study has led the contract giver to take unprecedented, financially detrimental decisions in order to protect the health of waste collectors – both city employees and its subcontractors' employees.

This rare outcome is interesting, as it shows that when the contract giver decides to do so, they have the power to play an active role in protecting the health of waste collection crewmembers through the specifications. The contract giver can decide to use their financial leeway to combat the damaging effects of competition and under-priced bids since they are able to set identical requirements for all service providers. Given their contractual position, they also have every power

to ensure that these requirements are met. Our intervention research study demonstrates that the contract giver, far from being a manager disconnected from the reality of work, can be a major driver of what we refer to as "occupational health-driven employability and career path management". Of course, the action outlined in this paper "merely" consisted of protecting waste collectors from any foreseeable deterioration in their health due to a managerial decision, and the GEPaST concept goes much further in that it is ideally part of a preventive approach and has a broad vision of health. But nothing is off the table: legally, the contract giver has significant latitude in drafting the specifications. The special technical specifications common to all lots already include requirements regarding preventive medicine and training, work uniforms, safety and compliance with the recommendations of the French Health Insurance Fund. This list could be augmented by GEPaST-related requirements. Our work shows that managers, given the right conditions, can wear the hat of an OHS officer.

This raises the following question: what are the conditions for success? Our intervention research study was carried out under very special conditions in many ways. Firstly, let's look back on the enlistment of the stakeholders, with the impetus coming from a consulting engineer at Carsat. This experienced external OHS officer, having longstanding ties with both the contract giver and industry partners, managed to persuade all these stakeholders to take part in an altogether unusual working group made up of competitors. There were various reasons why industry partners agreed to take part. The first industry partner was under threat of an injunction for questionable practices and, in participating, hoped to be treated with leniency by the Carsat OHS officer. The second industry partner had voluntarily regulated one-person collection internally to protect their waste collectors, making financial sacrifices in order to do so while expressing concerns that under the next contract they would be forced to abandon such ethical conduct: they hoped the study's findings would prove them right and help them to stay the course, which is what occurred in the end. The third industry partner was ambivalent: having to suddenly switch to one-person collection under pressure in the wake of a poorly negotiated contract, perhaps they would have preferred never to learn about the consequences of this mistake, but they were also concerned and did not dare refuse the external OHS officer's invitation to participate. Well versed in health and safety issues, the contract giver had to manage an unstable labour environment surrounding the issue of switching to one-person collection and the study was part of the negotiation; in addition, the contract giver was speculating over their legal liability in the event of an accident, including if one were to occur at a subcontractor. Secondly, the co-developed method largely lent legitimacy to the results, which were difficult for some to accept but nevertheless confirmed by the working group. Thirdly, we must stress the significant amount of resources that were deployed to complete the study. The intervention research study was successful thanks to all of these conditions being met.

Having made this observation, is this combination of conditions absolutely necessary in all cases, or can a study be successful without such an alchemy? In other words, is it possible to extend the study's approach under different conditions? GEPaST is predicated on the idea that all stakeholders involved in devising HRM practices have a role to play, as we have found that occupational health and safety issues concern a myriad of players. First and foremost, we seem to have established their need to form a network. But outside of the unusual circumstances we experienced, how can all levels of managers as well as internal and/or external OHS officers be persuaded to form a "community" sharing a common approach to a given occupational health issue, in this specific case that of one-person waste collection, and more generally that of occupational longevity in a demanding profession? In an inevitably different context, how can they be persuaded to work together to solve this problem using GEPaST?

The question is all the more relevant given recent developments involving our research subjects: the external OHS officer is now retired and no one has taken over the case. The contract is coming to an end and a new specifications document is being drawn up. There is talk of dropping the clause restricting one-person collection, as such restrictions are considered by subcontractors as being too costly and limiting. As the French poet Nicolas Boileau once put it, "A hundred times consider what you've said: Polish, repolish, every colour lay". Management is a living discipline, as is GEPaST, whose survival demands constant vigilance.

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Telework and emerging forms of control: a case study of the banking and financial sector during the COVID-19 pandemic

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On 17 March 2020, with the announcement of the first lockdown, French companies suddenly made full-time telework compulsory for employees. These emergency working arrangements were made possible by new information and communication technologies, but they also ushered in new modes of organising work, in particular new forms of control. According to literature on telework, such a change usually goes hand in hand with increased output control. However, the findings of our exploratory study, involving 17 employees from the banking and financial sector, showed a drop in output control. While this drop can be partly attributed to the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, our study also underscores the emergence of new forms of control based on behaviour (micromanagement, increasing the number of meetings) and inputs (increasing the time devoted to training). The study chiefly highlights the increase in technological control and the emergence of a more diffuse form of self-control through the collaborative development of a business culture based on urgency, hyper-responsiveness, a high degree of accountability and peer control.

Introduction

On 17 March 2020, a lockdown was imposed on the entire French population pursuant to emergency order no. 2020-260 and Act no. 2020-290. Telework was immediately rolled out in most businesses amid these unusual circumstances, in accordance with Article L.1222-11 of the Labour Code: "In the event of extraordinary circumstances, such as the threat of an epidemic, the rollout of telework could be deemed a necessary workplace arrangement to guarantee business continuity and protect employees". [1]

All of a sudden, most employees switched to full-time telework for an indefinite period. This situation, unprecedented in organisational history, provided an excellent opportunity for researchers to gain more insight into telework. It also came with the major responsibility of assisting businesses in navigating this challenge with far-reaching implications. Several authors have already examined this topic in order to gauge the positive and negative impacts of compulsory full-time telework (Taskin, 2021; Hansez, 2021) and its effect on managerial relations (Diard & Hachard, 2021). Conducted from April 2020 to February 2021 with the participation of 17 employees from four banking and financial organisations, this exploratory study focused on the various modes of work control.

Telework has brought about a shift in the modes of control. Thierry Breton (1994), a former Minister for the Economy, Finance and Industry, alludes to this in one of the first official French definitions of telework, which describes it as an "arrangement for organising and performing work carried out on a regular basis by an individual under the following conditions: [...] (i) remotely, i.e. outside the immediate premises where the output of this work is expected to be produced; where physically there is no possibility for the contract giver to monitor the service rendered by the teleworker; [...] (ii) using IT and/or telecommunication tools". When employees switch to telework, the expectation is that

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[1] This article was translated by the Translation Center of the French Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty

their managers more closely monitor their output since they are unable to observe them directly as they work (Lautsch et al., 2006; Pontier, 2014; Richardson & McKenna, 2014; Snell, 1992).

However, several studies have challenged this idea, especially now that telework has been widely embraced in large businesses. New information and communication technologies are paving the way for new methods of control (Fernandez, Guillot & Marrault, 2014; Sewell & Taskin, 2015), and employees seem to feel less pressure about their output when they are teleworking (Groen et al., 2018). The widespread adoption of telework in 2020 also changed how the scheme was implemented in businesses, and prompts the following research question: how have businesses adapted the control of their employees following the sudden shift to full-time telework during the COVID-19 pandemic?

We will first set out the theoretical framework of telework, and specifically its related modes of control, and then elaborate on the methodology adopted. Finally, the study's findings will be analysed and discussed in detail.

Literature review

The development of telework in the French banking and financial sector

Development and definition of telework in France
Telework is by no means a recent phenomenon: the first conceptualisations of this new working arrangement date back to the early 1970s. Nevertheless, its use was limited for a long time, and it was only starting in the 2000s and the advent of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) that it became a widespread practice in businesses (Tremblay, 2001; Taskin, 2003 and 2006). Today, telework typically constitutes "an arrangement in a service-sector business with over 250 employees" as noted in the 2020 annual study by Malakoff Humanis. However, telework covers a wide range of practices (Vayre, 2019), such as partial or full-time telework, and researchers highlight both its advantages – particularly in relation to work-life balance and stress reduction – and drawbacks (which generally relate to working longer hours at home) (Metzger & Cléach, 2004; Storhaye & Bouvard, 2013; Lasfargue & Fauconnier, 2018; Tissandier et al., 2019; Vayre, 2019).

The Act of 22 March 2012 regulates telework in France, giving it a formal legal status. Telework is defined as "any form of organising and/or performing work, on a voluntary basis and using ICTs, where work, which could also be performed at the employer's premises, is carried out away from those premises".[2] Furthermore, since 2018 a company-level agreement no longer needs to be signed when the employee and employer

agree to adopt telework arrangements, allowing them to formalise their agreement by any means (Article L.1222-9 of the Labour Code): "Telework is implemented under a collective agreement or, failing this, a charter drafted by the employer after consulting the social and economic committee if applicable. If no collective agreement or charter is in place, and the employee and employer agree to adopt telework arrangements, they formalise their agreement by any means". It should also be noted that the national agreement of 26 November 2020 (expanded on and published in France's *Journal officiel* of 13 April 2021) focuses on "a successful implementation of telework", demonstrating the extent to which telework has become a major issue not only from a legal standpoint but also particularly from an organisational and managerial one. Signatories of this agreement explicitly call for an overhaul of managerial practices and upskilling to deal with the organisational implications of telework. Businesses are therefore encouraged to provide training on remote management, compliance with the legal framework on working hours and the right to disconnect, regulated use of digital and collaborative tools, and cybersecurity.

Telework in the banking and financial sector during the COVID-19 pandemic
The banking and financial sector was one of the first to introduce telework arrangements in France. Firstly, it is one of the sectors with the greatest access to new technologies (Child & Loveridge, 1990; Lallé, 1999). Telework is also very concentrated in sectors where the proportion of managers is high, in a number of target departments and in head offices (ANDRH, 2017). Telework is typically prevalent in the telecoms, digital and banking sectors. It is also worth noting that the first studies by Jack Nills (1973) on telecommuting were conducted on a bank and an insurance company in Los Angeles, supporting the theory of telecoms supplanting transport (Diard & Dufour, 2021, p. 30).

The COVID-19 pandemic therefore did not cause all employees in this sector to switch to telework overnight, but rather it bolstered and extended this mode of organising work to all employees. The pandemic also increased the number of hours teleworked per week. According to the survey conducted by Malakoff Humanis, the proportion of teleworkers peaked at 41% on average in France in 2020, versus 30% pre-COVID. In January 2022, 37% of teleworkers worked outside the office two days a week, with 24% doing so three days a week (DARES).

This increase in the number of partial telework hours worked has triggered a radical change in the modes of organising work. Over time, this trend has redefined the spatial and temporal parameters of work, which has become an activity that can be done anywhere and at any time (Taskin, 2006). It has disrupted the continuity of three dimensions – time, space and activity – and calls into question how management typically operates (Lallé, 1999). This phenomenon strengthens the role of trust and autonomy at work (Diard & Hachard, 2021) while showing that the concept of controlling employees' activities needs a rethink.

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[2] Article L.1222-9 of the Labour Code, amended by Act no. 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 – Article 68, https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexteArticle.do;jsessionid=1E2C7614F007A3238E5DDD31CF7FBF06.tplgfr33s_3?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000037367660&idArticle=LEGIARTI000038923860&dateTexte=20180907&categorieLien=id#LEGIARTI000003892386

The various forms of control of teleworkers' activity

Work control

Control is an intrinsic aspect of work, constituting "any influence that establishes order, a certain regularity. A control situation exists [...] when an individual's behaviour is influenced by something or someone" (Chiapello, 1996, p. 51). In other words, from the moment interaction occurs with others, whether in a professional situation as an employee or independent contractor, a control situation is taking place. In bureaucratic organisations – in the broadest sense – control is intensified, and could be defined as a set of procedures that ensure that the decisions and conduct of individuals forming the organisation are in line with its own goals (Merchant, 1998).

In addition, control takes many forms at work, and Snell (1989) has sorted them into three broad categories. Firstly, behaviour control systems, which are based on a centralised hierarchy, adherence to procedures and the possibility to observe individuals when they are working. This form of control assumes that there is a causallink between the observable behaviour of individuals and their performance. The second category is output control systems, which are based on a decentralised hierarchy in which individuals do not directly choose their goals but rather the methods used to attain them. These systems afford a great deal of autonomy to individuals, but require elaborate coordination and information control systems to be in place. Lastly, input control systems are based on advanced selection and training mechanisms for individuals. They are particularly suitable in cases where the output is highly uncertain, such as in the world of arts or scientific research (Menger, 2018).

Furthermore, since the 20th century, technological control has only intensified (Chiapello, 1996). In Frederick Winslow Taylor's system, the main purpose of work is to keep the machine running so that the pace typical of a mass production economy can be maintained. Control is ensured by technology, as the production standards are set based on the machines. However, control is ensured on an individual basis by supervisors (Dambrin, 2005). Since the advent of ICTs, technological control at work has been intensified and radically overhauled. Previously, control was performed on the basis of a heavily vertical hierarchy albeit at a specific point in time in person. Currently, control can be carried out at any time and remotely with the aid of technology.

Controlling teleworkers

Telework disrupts first and foremost spatial and temporal parameters (Lallé, 1999; Taskin, 2006). Work is no longer directly visible (Pontier, 2014) and individuals can no longer be directly observed by their superiors. This lack of behaviour control therefore naturally tends to be offset by an intensification of output control (Pontier, 2014; Richardson & McKenna, 2014; Sewell & Taskin, 2015). Managers set new targets in response to the considerable degree of autonomy granted to teleworkers (Felstead et al., 2003), creating new performance indicators that are more easily measured remotely, altering performance standards (Lautsch et al., 2006) and implementing new reporting procedures.

Recently, a number of studies have nevertheless brought nuance to this observation. Firstly, although quantitative targets tend to increase with telework, some employees feel less pressure to meet performance objectives as per the analysis of Groen et al. in a survey conducted in 2018 involving 900 employees from a financial services institution. Perceived pressure in relation to output therefore seems to be different, in spite of raised targets. ICTs also provide alternatives to output control by simplifying behaviour control carried out remotely (Fernandez, Guillot & Marrault, 2014). It is now much more straightforward to monitor deliverables and hold informal progress meetings remotely using new technologies (Sewell & Taskin, 2015). The question arises, then, whether the widespread adoption of teleworking practices – particularly the increase in hours teleworked per week – necessarily results in intensified output control or whether it actually creates new control standards.

New forms of controlling teleworkers

Some researchers have noted the emergence of new forms of controlling teleworkers, and in particular the introduction of "self-control" that they carry out for themselves (Pontier, 2014; de Vaujany, Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, Munro, Nama & Holt, 2021; Diard & Hachard, 2021). The control of teleworkers is no longer strictly carried as a means to establish direct obedience to authority. Control is now the individuals' responsibility, and they are required to demonstrate their autonomy and self-discipline (Taskin & Tremblay, 2010). As highlighted by Diard and Hachard in a recent study (2021, p. 48), "no formalised control is carried out by managers, but rather teleworkers practise a form of self-control". Teleworkers tend to exceed managers' expectations (overtime hours, higher level of concentration when working, etc.) and readily go above and beyond the requirements "related to the employment contract and the reciprocity of the psychological contract" as they perceive telework as a privilege granted by their organisation. They develop a sense of accountability (Vayre, 2019) towards their organisations that have given them the opportunity to work remotely.

Several authors have analysed the introduction of these new standards and these self-control and "consensual subjection" practices through a Foucauldian and Deleuzian lens (Leclercq-Vandelanoitte & Isaac, 2013; de Vaujany et al., 2021). The concept of the "panopticon" (Foucault, 1975), the possibility of observing without being seen, underscores how modern organisations use new technologies to put individuals in situations of constant uncertainty and pressure so as to better control them. Individuals have no idea when they are being observed or not, and are therefore forced to engage in self-control to avoid punishment. Today, chief information officers can easily view the connection time of teleworkers on their company software or teleconference tools without them knowing, thereby establishing informal conduct standards at work. Our "contemporary control societies"

as described by Deleuze are also typical of these new forms of self-control. These societies are characterised by a "rhizomatic" extension of surveillance units which do not solely conduct downward and centralised surveillance as is the case for panopticons. An upwards and horizontal approach forms the basis of control (Leclercq-Vandelanoitte & Isaac, 2013), facilitated by quantified self technology and new collaborative participatory tools. The culture of urgency, hyper-connectivity and hyper-responsiveness has formed a set of standards developed by organisations and individuals collaboratively, according to which the individuals in question must constantly be available and reachable. "Ultimately, the breakdown of a company's working hours and management's indifference to attendance time [...] have gone hand in hand with modes of control and self-control, based on an internalisation of a company's goals and values" (Leclercq-Vandelanoitte & Isaac, 2013, p. 18).

Research methodology

Scope of study

This study intends to examine the new forms of control that have emerged for teleworkers following the COVID-19 pandemic. We have therefore decided to adopt an exploratory and qualitative approach by conducting semi-structured interviews involving stakeholders from the banking and financial sector. Qualitative methods are particularly well suited for identifying new organisational concepts (Dumez, 2011; Eisenhardt, 1989), while, in our view, the banking and financial sector seems a particularly appropriate choice to analyse new forms of telework. For example, 17% of bank employees in 2017 did not have their own office, according to the French *Observatoire des métiers de la banque*. Furthermore, as the banking and financial sector was one of the first to embrace telework on a large scale, employees in the sector have more experience with the related practices and can more effectively take a step back from them (Diard & Dufour, 2021). An examination of this speci-fic sector will therefore ensure a greater generalisation and transferability of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2013).

Data collection

Data was collected in two stages. An initial immersive research stage at the firm Natixis was carried out by the third co-author. This approach was adopted with a view to providing a preliminary observation of the field, allowing for subsequent trialling and validation of a research question. This is a valid avenue to observe, and then hypothesise, certain aspects of organisations that are tricky to access, such as organisational control, specifically in the banking sector. This immersion began before the interview stages as part of a fixed-term engagement undertaken by the third co-author. During this observation period, new organisational arrangements were progressively discovered.

The two other co-authors supplemented the study with feedback from the field, involving several other banking and financial institutions. In total, 17 semi-structured interviews with managers and non-managers were conducted.

The interview guide was developed with an inductive approach in mind, so as to better understand the daily teleworking practices of employees in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, without focusing on control practices (Chevalier & Meyer in Chevalier, Cloutier & Mitev, 2018). The guide was developed around the four following themes, and was fine-tuned during the initial immersive research stage:

• Teleworking practices (purpose, frequency, personal experience, working methods)
• The company culture when teleworking
• Colleague relations
• Manager relations

We conducted 17 interviews with employees from four different organisations (see Table 1). The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, and were held during the first lockdown in April 2020 and after the second lockdown in February 2021.

Analysis method

Data was analysed abductively (Shepherd & Sutcliffe, 2011). Firstly, we launched a process of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; King, 1998) and multi-level coding, which is why the concepts of self-discipline, trust between managers and their staff, and an enabling company culture have come to the fore. We believe that the notions of trust and control are all the more integral in our data, and have expanded our literature review on the notions of control and trust in telework situations. Through a continuous process of comparing data and theoretical categories, we were able to identify new categories – in particular output control and self-control categories. A final stage of emergent coding (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2013) identified our level 1 and level 2 categories for the new forms of control when teleworking before reaching a point of theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Rheinhardt et al., 2018). (see Table 2)

Findings

While banking and financial firms were ahead of the curve in rolling out telework in France, the COVID-19 pandemic suddenly forced them to arrange full-time telework for the vast majority of their employees in 2020 and 2021. The banks we examined notably adopted new training modules to keep employees busy and control their working hours. The frequency and format of meetings also changed, with new collaborative and control tools being put in place. Teleworkers have also developed a new form of self-control, developed in cooperation with their peers and their managers, and resulting from an internalisation of the organisations' expectations.

First name	Gender	Age	Socio-professional category	Seniority in organisation	Occupation
Malika	M	34	Manager	2 years	Legal expert
Karim	M	30	Manager	3 years	IT specialist
Géraldine	M	42	Manager	4 years	HR project manager
Sébastien	M	28	Manager	2 years	Financial analyst
Stéphanie	M	35	Manager	9 years	Project manager
Martin	F	32	Manager	3 years	Legal expert
Sylviane	F	38	Supervisor	7 years	Back office manager
Pierre	F	42	Manager	11 years	IT specialist
Nicolas	F	54	Manager	20 years	Project manager
Marine	F	29	Supervisor	2 years	Back office manager
Gauthier H	M	39	Manager	4 years	Regional sales director
Gauthier R	M	39	Manager	8 years	Senior asset management consultant
Nayana	F	31	Manager	1 year	Head of sales activities and communications for private wealth management
François	M	25	Manager	1.5 years	Bank inspector
Martin	M	39	Manager	13 years	Head of product development
Mickael	M	34	Manager	13 years	Senior quantitative analyst
Annick	F	64	Manager	21 years	IT team manager

Table 1: Characteristics of the sample

Output control	Input control	Remote behaviour control	Technological control	Self-control
Target-driven management	Onboarding of new employees	Close supervision through micromanagement	Use of new technological control tools for remote working	Feelings of accountability counterbalanced by greater autonomy and trust
Organisation of new reporting methods	Training programmes	Increase in the number of teleconference meetings	Right to disconnect (work-life balance)	Rhizomatic surveillance (upwards and horizontal)
			Right to disconnect (increased workload)	Collaborative development of control
				Culture of urgency and hyper-responsiveness

Table 2: Level 1 and level 2 categories for new forms of control when teleworking

No step-up in output control for teleworkers

The companies examined responded to questions on a case-by-case basis, based on the circumstances and business lines, in relation to the development of targets. Sales departments have generally seen their targets lowered.

> "They have changed the targets for output. They pro-rated the annual margin plan and removed a month of targets", a senior asset management consultant told us.
>
> "Targets were reviewed downwards, to 80% of last year's target", said a regional sales director.

The other employees on the whole did not see their targets change:

> "I have my targets for the year, and COVID-19 hasn't changed a thing" (Senior quantitative analyst).

The targets did not change even though the workload at times had increased considerably.

> "I feel that we sent off a lot more deliverables during lockdown than out of it. The pace picked up a bit at that point" (Head of product development).

Companies, caught off guard by the COVID-19 pandemic, did not have very clear guidelines and managers adapted pragmatically to the situation. Most managers decided to change and increase the reporting systems in place. Sales departments have felt this shift:

> "More activity tracking is carried out. We are asked to make a bigger effort to maintain activity levels [...]" (Regional sales director).

Support departments have also seen this change:

> "[Nowadays] I have an individual review meeting with him [my manager] once every two weeks. It is during these one-to-ones that we set everything, the deliverables, dates, etc." (Head of sales activities and communications).

Certain managers, unable to check output in person, have amended performance criteria and introduced new strategies to ensure targets are achieved:

> "Phones are now factored into reporting" (Senior asset management consultant).

Output control is still in place, but is less centred on direct and quantitative control and more akin to holistic, qualitative control. Controlling deliverables is a frequently observed management practice that sometimes is the only possible control method left in certain business lines (e.g. project management).

Input control

Input control refers to the processes of selecting and socialising employees, as well as to the processes of training and development (Snell, 1992). However, the string of lockdowns and compulsory full-time telework have made integrating new employees trickier:

> "Those who joined during lockdowns told us that it was hell; there was nothing arranged for the onboarding sessions and they had to learn on the job" (IT team manager).

Teams had to be re-organised, managers had less time to devote to new hires, and no informal conversations could be held. This observation, which every manager whom we met agreed with, did not in some cases apply to young employees, particularly interns and trainees, who seemed less taken aback by the lack of an induction. It is likely that they had no or little awareness of the traditional induction process.

While the difficulties of integrating new employees could be expected, we were surprised to note that many companies used this mandatory telework period to increase the number of training sessions for employees, and thereby indirectly control the working hours of teleworkers. For example, some companies encouraged their employees to complete more e-learning modules:

> "We had training courses on data protection and best managerial practices – in e-learning format and also in person for one day" (Senior quantitative analyst).

But according to some managers and employees, the companies were blatantly trying to keep their employees "busy":

> "This approach was less successful when it came to keeping consultants busy. They were mistaken to have this misguided belief that they weren't busy enough and that it was impacting business. They had many content-heavy training courses to do every week, providing a lot of content. Us local managers also organised workshops for them. Different formats were also provided, further expanding the training offering. Training courses and workshops were being organised, and our schedules were more packed than usual. This state of being overly connected added to the mental load, which wasn't a good thing" (Senior asset management consultant).

The expression "making the most of" came up several times during our interviews, which gives the impression that companies were trying to keep their employees busy at all costs and avoid any down time.

A step-up in behaviour control, now carried out remotely

Typically with telework, the conduct of employees cannot be directly monitored. However, the development of new technologies has completely flipped this model, particularly as a result of the widespread adoption of teleconferencing. New formats have made their entry and are here to stay, and new possibilities are available for managers to be involved in their employees' day-to-day routines at a distance:

> "What works well are mini tailored workshops, in small groups in front of a screen; it's better than mass gatherings with everyone that last an hour or an hour and a half – they don't work. This format will be kept on post-COVID" (Regional sales director).

In turn, the number of teleconference meetings has soared since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a source of additional stress and pressure:

> "I feel a little more mentally drained right now than I did before during standard telework days, when my work-from-home days were slightly calmer, at least when it came to phone calls and meetings" (HR project manager).
>
> "People look at your available slots on Outlook and your diary and they go very quickly. You realise that you don't have a lot of time to work on your projects. There are also too many meetings; we brought it up to our manager, who wanted us to attend regional

meetings. Nine meetings a week... you simply can't attend all those meetings. We need time to work on our projects" (Legal expert).

Employees must develop new skills in leading meetings and are clearly learning to do so:

"We noticed straight away those who had previously teleworked. Some had put together an agenda and it worked well, while others were clueless and couldn't figure out how to speak. We used both Skype and Teams, and some preferred Skype. There were a few who domineered meetings. Hybrid meetings will be a big matter to discuss when employees are back in the office; some of them have poor connections, and you can't tell who's speaking when the meetings are held in big rooms. [...] I made sure to leave five minutes at the end to just have a chat. More needs to be done" (IT team manager).

"I think the difference is that we have more organised meetings to the point that eventually over the day it becomes overkill. The problem is more to do with the informal catch-ups we are told to organise during the day, because of course we don't bump into people any more" (Head of product development).

Informal meetings have become more organised, and manager expectations have risen. Managers can call on their employees at any time thanks to teleconferencing and organise team meetings more frequently, resulting in a form of behaviour control at work.

Technological control: an exacerbating factor in the "hyper-availability" of employees

Remote technological control has intensified in two ways in the companies we examined during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some companies have put in place new technological control tools, with one of them introducing a new customer relationship management (CRM) system:

"I wanted to track [activity] with the aid of CRM tools; we trained staff to use CRM tools to prove that their work was actually being carried out. In the past, things were a bit lax" (Regional sales director).

New features of teleconferencing tools have opened up more opportunities to monitor the work of employees:

"My superiors sometimes ask me to share my screen to show how much progress I've made on my work" (Banking inspector).

New technological tools have also made employees a lot more available. As workloads and working hours increase, employees are struggling more and more to draw a line between their work and personal life. An overload of requests enabled by such technologies results in a hyper-connectivity characterised by infor-mal orders.

"Sometimes you just have days like these, you don't have a choice, you just have to make progress on your projects so you have to do it [...] I feel like I'm more connected, more often, until later and with longer working hours [...]".

For another employee, "emails and phone calls outside of work hours are not manageable, sometimes I have to reply to queries at lunchtime, in the evenings and over the weekend".

Employees therefore consider their work-life balance their main concern.

"I always try to force myself to switch my computer off and put it in sleep mode for an hour for lunch and in the evenings, when I don't have late meetings, I make an effort to disconnect, switch off my devices and not check my emails" (IT specialist).

But this is often very tricky.

"I break up my day, but clocking out in busy periods is just not possible. Sometimes I wake up in the night to work because I'm so stressed" (Banking inspector).

"I'm not good at managing my time, I tend to have a fixation on finishing my tasks. My husband brings me back to my senses: I take breaks and have a coffee with him, and join the virtual after-work drink and coffee break events (on Thursday evenings once every fortnight) to have the opportunity to socialise; I now spend the time I spent commuting working; it's a slog and tiring" (IT team manager).

Self-control

Employees tend to practise self-control by directly internalising the company's needs and bearing the responsibility of control. During the extended period of remote working, many employees developed a strong sense of accountability, as well as the idea that they needed to be available constantly. A legal expert told us:

"I feel a greater need to be on hand, which is currently stronger than ever". It is also the case for this back office manager: "It's perhaps more difficult right now to say no in the evenings because we're not physically leaving work, we can't say that we're packing our bag and going. We're at home, so it's maybe a bit trickier to turn down a meeting at 7pm, whereas making people stay in the office for a meeting at that time happens a lot less".

Some employees even feel guilty and believe that they need to justify their entitlement to telework:

"It would help people feel less guilty [...] if everyone, including managers, teleworked".

Some feel the need to make a commitment verging on the unconditional:

"I'm quite flexible. Last week, I wrapped up a meeting at 10pm. I prioritise queries and requests, but because I like my job... I do things how I like" (Regional sales director).

This self-control practised by employees is partially the result of expectations set by their colleagues and peers. Their teleworking needs to be justified, and they have to make an even greater commitment to not punish the rest of the team.

"I think there are people who believe that we don't work as effectively remotely as when in the workplace" (Financial analyst).

"I believe there were perhaps some preconceptions held by managers and even employees concerning telework. In my opinion, those preconceptions will be proven wrong. Yes, I think we need to realise that teleworkers are working. Working remotely is still work" (Back office manager).

These new expectations and working standards are not directly laid down by managers, but rather are developed in tandem with employees:

> "We set up a WhatsApp group chat to discuss things informally, in addition to the professional messaging accounts we have. We tried to keep it alive over the weeks. We learnt a lot from doing it; certain things worked, while others didn't. We came up with additional smaller formats for activities so as to stay connected" (Senior asset management consultant).

> "On the first day, I made the mistake of wearing a T-shirt during a video call, and since realising what I had done I have worn a shirt every day. [...] One time I was wearing a sweatshirt and I was told, 'It's weird seeing you wear that' and I said, 'Okay'. I now get it, and I wear a shirt for peace of mind" (Head of product development).

In this kind of situation, the emergence of a form of decentralised and unspoken control of others is evident. The employee changes their outfit to meet the collective's new standards.

A manager's trust is earned when employees demonstrate an ability to organise themselves, act autonomously to complete tasks and exercise self-discipline. The manager therefore does not place all their trust in them: it is earned on the proviso that employees prove that they work just as – if not even more – effectively.

> "I think she trusts me, she can see that teleworking hasn't affected my deliverables or the way I meet expectations" (IT specialist).

> "In my opinion, it's a case of trusting the individual who is working remotely, and them managing their working schedule and handing in their deliverables every day. There's no surveillance and that motivates me more" (Legal expert).

Discussion

Telework is by no means a recent phenomenon (Lallement, 1990; Scott, 1990), but its widespread adoption in large companies began in the 2000s (Taskin, 2021). Many companies, particularly in the banking and financial sector, began to allow their employees to partially telework, i.e. generally four days in the office and one day remotely per week. Suddenly, the COVID-19 pandemic erupted and most employees found themselves teleworking full time for a year. This extraordinary organisational situation, a product of the pandemic which has however persisted over time, gave us an opportunity to observe and analyse radical changes to the telework approach adopted by four organisations in the banking and financial sector. Our study shows that, contrary to expectations, output control did not intensify and was supplanted by a new form of behaviour control, which was carried out remotely, with the increase in teleconference meetings. We also shed light on the development of a new form of "self-control" within organisations, shifting the responsibility of activity control from managers to the employees themselves.

The emergence of a new form of behaviour control, but carried out remotely

When employees telework, managers tend to step up output control since they can no longer directly observe them as in the office (Snell, 1992). This finding is regularly confirmed in telework studies (Kossek et al., 2006; Pontier, 2014; Richardson & McKenna, 2014; Sewell & Taskin, 2015). We however found that this was not the case for the companies we examined during the COVID-19 pandemic. Firstly, employee targets underwent little or no change. Business targets for both employees and managers were even broadly lowered. Some companies have changed their reporting practices to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and new business practices (teleconferencing), but employees have not felt that their output is being more closely monitored. On the contrary, we noted a step-up in behaviour control with an increase in the number of teleconference meetings – which are shorter but more frequent – and the introduction of regular reviews during face-to-face conversations or virtual coffee breaks, which are opportunities for managers to both check their employees are working their correct hours and to remind them of the conduct expected of them.

Can these lowered targets and reduced output control be attributed to the adverse economic conditions in 2020? Yes, but only partly so. With full-time telework for both employees and managers came new working standards. The wide adoption and frequent use of teleconference meetings gave managers an opportunity to enter into the daily lives of employees and monitor their behaviour remotely. As underscored by Taskin in his latest research (2021), telework in 2020 was more of a transposition of the working day at the office to the employees' home, rather than an opportunity to work independently at home, away from managers and colleagues. Similarly, Dudezert and Laval (2021) in Beaulier and Kalika (2021) bring up the notion of a "new normal" and a stage of disillusionment experienced by employees, who see no radical changes being made by the organisation in the post-COVID world.

Teleconference meetings, generally shorter in length, are now also greater in number and more formal. Chats in the hallway and off-the-cuff discussions between an ajar office door have been swapped out for teleconference review meetings scheduled in e-calendars. Informal relations between employees and managers have been replaced with planned and scheduled discussions, in addition to new behaviour standards relating to clothing and speaking in a meeting, bolstering the verticality of manager relations.

During the extended period of telework, managers very quickly turned messaging and teleconference tools into actual "electronic panopticons" (Zuboff, 1988; Poster, 1990; Sewell & Wilkinson, 1992). On one hand, employee calendars can be consulted at all times, and on the other, managers can literally infiltrate the homes and private lives of employees, getting a look at their interior space and children. While this can sometimes make for a funny situation, it can also make employees feel that their privacy has been violated. The situation verges on the literal definition of Foucault's "panopticon" (1975) – an architectural structure for control – but with this structure being virtual in nature. When employees work from their home, they can be observed at any time by their manager and they have to adjust their conduct accordingly.

The development of "self-control" by employees

The employees we interviewed told us that they felt more independent on the job, reflecting many other older (Lallé, 1999; Storhaye & Bouvard, 2013) and more recent (Diard & Hachard, 2021) studies on telework. However, this greater autonomy is part of a trade-off (Taskin, 2003; Taskin & Tremblay, 2010). Managers expect a higher level of commitment from their employees working remotely, with some revising targets (Felstead et al., 2003). Most managers emphasise the importance of staying on track when working from home. This insistence – although usually expressed in a positive way through thanks that are as genuine as they are forceful – tends to shift the responsibility of work motivation to the employees themselves. In addition, the autonomy of teleworkers results in a need to be increasingly available, or even "hyper-available" (Mello, 2007; Dumas & Ruiller, 2014). Once again, managers never explicitly demand this hyper-availability, but all employees have stated their troubles in drawing a line between their work and personal life (Dumas & Ruiller, 2014; Lasfargue & Fauconnier, 2018; Metzger & Cléach, 2004; Vayre, 2019). They are required to maintain strict self-discipline, particularly with regard to their working hours, otherwise their family might step in.

Self-control, a form of performance control self-imposed by employees, also involves the "rhizomatic" extension of surveillance units as theorised by Deleuze (Leclercq-Vandelanoitte & Isaac, 2013). Employees tend to naturally develop feelings of guilt towards their colleagues, as if they have to further justify their opportunity to telework. What is even more remarkable within the scope of this study is that these feelings of guilt are not directed towards just employees working at the office (Diard & Hachard, 2021) given that everybody is teleworking. These feelings are abstract and relate to the apparent belief that better overall performance is guaranteed in the office. Employees have internalised the idea that they must further justify their work since they are not physically in the office. The rhizomatic extension of surveillance units is indirectly carried out through the establishment of informal standards via social media such as WhatsApp. Employees themselves set up virtual groups on their personal mobile phones to keep in touch with their colleagues. While this need for belonging and social interaction is essential and widely encouraged by organisations, it also further blurs the line between work and personal life and creates new social control standards.

We have observed the development of a hybrid mode of control of telework that is more vertical and horizontal than the conventional in-person modes of control. This method was initially more vertical, as managers can now more easily track the activity of their employees remotely using new technologies. As they are also teleworking, managers impose less boundaries and intrude on the private life of their employees. New telework standards, particularly relating to coordinating teleconference meetings, also make it easier to put direct behaviour control in place. The control method then became more horizontal as employees and their peers set new telework standards, on their own initiative, regarding productivity and commitment. In fact, most new standards are rarely imposed by managers or the organisations. This new hybrid mode of control is based on mutual trust between employees and their managers. This trust, which is instrumental in telework, as several researchers have previously highlighted (Lallé, 1999; Storhaye & Bouvard 2013; Tissandier & Mariani-Rousset, 2019), nevertheless requires truly capable managers and a positive organisational environment (Parker, Knight & Keller, 2020), without which this trust can quickly devolve into a transfer of managerial responsibilities to the employees themselves.

Limitations and contributions to the field of management

The findings of our exploratory study give a closer insight into the new forms of management and control in a telework context. However, they do have their limitations that merit explanation. The field of our study, the banking and financial sector, is particularly ahead of the curve when it comes to the rollout of telework in France. The scope of this study should therefore be expanded to include other sectors where telework is less widespread. As we previously mentioned, our study was conducted against a unique backdrop: mandatory, full-time telework over several months during the COVID-19 pandemic. This unusual situation gave us an unprecedented opportunity to gain more insight into the organisational changes resulting from telework (Hansez, 2021), but it also requires prompt confirmation from other studies in order to monitor the sharp growth of telework in the coming years.

Lastly, our study's reach extends beyond the academic community: the panorama depicted by this study can be used to draw up management recommendations for practitioners. First, while a relationship of trust between managers and their teams while teleworking should be established (Lallé, 1999; Storhaye & Bouvard 2013; Tissandier & Mariani-Rousset, 2019), it must not devolve into an outright delegation of managerial responsibilities (Philippe, Meyer & Culié, 2022). Managers still need to be involved in establishing performance standards in tandem with teleworkers. As telework is mainstreamed, managers must be more aware of any increases in workload and the hyper-connectivity of employees. Work control cannot solely revolve around self-control, otherwise psychosocial risks, particularly forms of acute stress and burnout, can emerge (Ray & Bouchet, 2010; Fernandez et al., 2014; Diard & Dufour, 2021). In addition, the development of new technologies and the increasing number of days teleworked tend to simply make teleworking the same experience as working in the office for employees. Managers absolutely must try to avoid this pitfall by creating new forms of output control without running the risk of relying on micro-management and behaviour control, worsening the drawbacks of both working in the office and teleworking.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to examine the new modes of control that have emerged when telework was widely adopted in 2020 and 2021 following the COVID-19 pandemic. Contrary to expectations, output control barely or not at all intensified in the banking and financial companies we studied. However, we observed the establishment of new organisational practices, such as an increase in the number of teleconference meetings, which directly resulted in the development of remote behaviour control and reinforces the tendency of employees to engage in self-control. Our study therefore confirms the recent findings on the implementation of new forms of telework control (Tissandier & Mariani-Rousset, 2019; Diard & Hachard, 2021; Taskin, 2021), and moreover supplements them by underscoring the development of hybrid modes of control that are both more vertical and horizontal than the conventional in-person modes of control.

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In search of the "ideal manager" in Africa: What it means to run an "African" business

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Can African managers comply with both the requirements of Western-style rationality – which strives for the preservation/maximisation of corporate interests and profit – and African cultural traditions based more on safeguarding "brotherhood," "kindness," "sharing," and "generosity," which provide the moral basis for the sustainable social contract of community life? What common ground is there between these two polarities that would make the reasonable and tailored practice of capitalism possible? In this paper, we show how capitalism has developed and operates in Africa, as well as the contradictions that still exist today in the definition of the role of African leaders, and which remain a challenge for the managers of tomorrow.

In this paper, we will be looking at the career paths of two director generals who successively headed up the *Office National Camerounais de Radio et de Télévision* (CRTV). Both ended up being prosecuted and jailed, having been charged with "misappropriation of public funds" (Biwole, 2019). The first ran the company for 16 years from 1988 to 2004 and the second – the first's successor – for 12 years from 2004 to 2016. They were accused of various breaches of their obligations as managers relating, in particular, to acts of financial management. However, the two individuals appeared to have managed CRTV using diametrically opposed management methods: one, by upholding African traditions (being quick to "share" with and show "generosity" to the people around him), and the other, "in a Western style" (i.e. more "selfish" and rather acting to uphold the company's interests). This provides food for thought about the ability of African managers to follow contradictory governance principles, the first formal and covering compliance with an entire set of "best management practices", and the other, "based on customs" which stigmatises these "best practices" as being dangerous or even deadly and destructive for social ties and community life. [1]

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[1] This article was translated by the Translation Center of the French Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty

Location of the survey and methodology

The premises which house the senior management of CRTV (Cameroon Radio Television) are located in the country's capital, Yaoundé, on a site near to the Presidency of the Republic. It is here that the majority of the organisation's management teams are based and it is the sole centre for television broadcasting. Under Cameroonian law, the company is a government-funded administrative and commercial institution. In 2022, it had a budget of 26bn CFA francs (around €40m) which had to cover most of its operating, personnel (approximately 2,400 employees), production (news and programmes) and investment expenditure. It has a network of ten regional and five urban stations which extend nationwide and beyond (thanks to satellite broadcasting). In Cameroon's political and institutional landscape, it is seen as – and this is usually the case in other similar African countries – the figurehead for "defending the government's interests" and those of the incumbent politicians. This was true as from its creation in 1985 at a time when Cameroon was experiencing serious economic turmoil (Aerst et al., 2000), which soon became political with sustained protests against the central government (Bayart, 1986; Courade and Sindjoun, 1999; Sindjoun, 1994). These events would, in part, broadly dictate the company's editorial position

as a propaganda mouthpiece for the government. This comes as no surprise for an organisation that has always received the majority of its resources (85%) from direct government subsidies.

So, it was in this company that we conducted 26 interviews between February and June 2020 divided between the cities of Yaoundé (the headquarters: 16), Douala (the country's economic capital: 6) and Bertoua (capital of the Eastern region: 4). The interviews were semi-structured and the participants were chosen on the basis of having experienced the managerial tenure of at least one of the managers, for their entire term of office. Out of these 26 interviews, 18 related to both managers, only three to Gervais Mendo Ze alone and five to Amadou Vamoulké alone. The interviews were held in French and lasted an average of 20 minutes. From the sample, only four interviewees were women and the average age was 50. Eight of the people are now retired, four had changed jobs and therefore 14 were still working at CRTV. The current director general, who was the country's most senior and respected journalist during the time the two held the same post, was not interviewed.

Evu, a crucial notion for understanding management in the Cameroonian context

The management style adopted by Gervais Mendo Ze during his 16 years at the head of CRTV cannot be understood without invoking evu, a concept representing a "good life" which dominates the psyche of almost all the Bantu peoples of South Cameroon (and of Central Africa), those covered by the tropical forest (where the so-called "Fang-Beti-Pahouin" group are predominant both in numbers and culturally) and which stands out due to broad cultural and spiritual similarities as highlighted by a large number of works (Balandier, 1965, 1982; Laburthe-Tolra, 1981, 1984, 1999; Ombolo, 1986; Aubame, 2002).

Evu grounds itself in a religious system based on a lack of distinction between human and the divine, within the divine itself, between the living and the dead, and between good and evil. Laburthe-Tolra (1965) writes: "This question of the nature of Zambe [God] is very unclear". Indeed, it is impossible to say whether it is god the supreme creator or the "essential ancestor", a "Zambe" who appears "sometimes as immanent, sometimes as terribly transcendent" (ibid., p. 23), sometimes as "God", and sometimes as the "first man in the origins of the world" (Owono, 2011). From this comes a belief in the double nature of everything, in particular human nature which is considered to combine four elements: the body, bodily essence, the soul and spiritual essence" (ibid., p. 60). So, continues Owono, man, within the traditional "fang" vision, and exceptionally several animals, possess, in addition to a body and the life force connected with the body, another force of their own. The latter, unlike the former, is not totally connected with the body and matter. It can distance itself and act alone and therefore be seen as a separate personality. Similarly, it can also perish when the body dies. This is what Laburthe-Tolra (1977) calls "bodily essence" or witch-substance.

According to Mallart-Guimera (1975), the resulting notion of *evu*, which may adopt any symbolic content, expresses very different – or sometimes contradictory – realities. *Evu* has an "indiscriminate character": it is "neither good nor bad but possibly both at the same time" (ibid., p. 36). Bopda (2003) states that "*evu* symbolises defection or deconstruction", whilst for others it is "absolute evil". He mentions the cost, always prohibitive, to be paid by a person whose boundless appetite makes them benefit from the productive efforts of other people without giving them their fair share in return (ibid., p. 177).

Bopda's definition puts *evu* in the sphere of consumption and "enjoyment". According to him, this dark side, hidden deep inside each person, functions with the following features: "In order to be legitimate, and as a result, non-corrupting, all enjoyment should be the culmination of a productive effort, or even suffering, by the person enjoying". Legitimacy calls for the counterbalancing and projective prerequisite of ensuring a productive effort. As a result, all enjoyment can only be, sooner or later, the mirror image of known suffering in producing the object which is the source of the enjoyment. This is the meaning of the "price to pay". You cannot enjoy something for free "without paying in one way or another sooner or later".

The ambivalence of *evu* means that, by definition, it is difficult, or even impossible, to know in advance what type of *evu* an individual is carrying. "Strong and good *evu*, able to bring happiness to its possessor, and strong and evil *evu*, which gives the power to do harm" (Owono, 2011). This means that there is uncertainty, chronic insecurity, about being around humans. The same individual may be good or bad, or switch between good and bad. They can do as much harm as good.

Positive *evu* is associated with prosperous and continual material accumulation. Automatically (according to Warnier, 1993; Bernaut and Tonda, 2000), *evu* involves sharing and generosity as the person who has more than others must redistribute large portions to their acquaintances. It is irrelevant whether their wealth is their own or belongs to a third party, whether it was acquired through work or by predation, as long as it passes through hands, those hands must earmark part of it for the required social redistribution.

In light of the foregoing, an ideal "good *evu*" is the polar opposite of modern capitalism's ideal manager who is assumed to act according to the company's "selfish and rational" interests (Chatenay, 2004). These special metaphysics mean that Africans (Cameroonians in the case at hand) consider all individuals who hold or handle positions and funds in which they accumulate as being required to redistribute, "to give food", to their acquaintances, to embody the moral, spiritual and functional justification of the positive *evu* which they seem to be carrying (Godong, 2011).

Born in the forest area of Fang-Beti-Pahouin and raised with these values, Gervais Mendo Ze, the first of the managers who was covered by our study, epitomised, so to speak, "good *evu*". This director general's entire life was devoted to representing, on a daily basis, the positive *evu* of someone who "does good for people", who gives them food (Godong, 2011). Food distribution symbolises sharing, solidarity and generosity: "You have to eat with others", you have to "give food to your own", "not be stingy", and, most importantly "do not eat alone" as "food" is the social incarnation of the basis for pleasure and sensory satisfaction, the starting point for any relationship based on an equal footing and acknowledgment of the other's humanity. Relations with the world and the notions of all forms of sociability are built around food. Offering food becomes pivotal at the same time as refusing it becomes a cardinal curse (ibid.).

So, carrying, in spite of himself, this écriture d'âme [cultural influence of these values], Gervais Mendo Ze was to use the entire company he managed to build and justify his positive *evu*. He was to make it "his thing" so as to pick out the resources and redistribute them. In the same country and several decades earlier, Alain Henry (1998) had already flagged up a comparable moral economy in the national electricity corporation (SONEL); he showed that, from a social viewpoint, it is important to treat others not only as if they are "friends" but also "brothers" with whom you share everything.

The figure of the "Big Man"

Having first appeared in the works of the American anthropologist Marshall D. Sahlins (1963) on the peoples of Polynesia, the metaphorical figure of the "Big Man" has been frequently used by political science researchers who have demonstrated how important he is. To date, management researchers have not taken sufficient account of this and it has been too rarely applied to managers of African companies. As we shall see, the concept has a very close dialectical relationship with the *evu* cosmogony of the peoples of the South Cameroonian forest.

The Big Man is a key figure in the social sphere. His position provides him with access to extraordinary resources and capabilities as regards accumulation and redistribution. In the African context, a figure such as Gervais Mendo Ze would appear to almost perfectly enshrine the profile established by Sahlins, namely a central position, a reputation for generosity and the ability to redistribute with extreme benevolence.

English-language literature defines Big Man rule as "a form of autocratic rule that is highly personali[s]ed and restrained little by modern institutions" (Anthony, 2006, p. 160). Deriving from a mix of precolonial standards, postcolonial institutions, weak states, economic opportunities and social redistribution expectations, Big Man rule lays down a relationship of clientelism between the boss and their employees and the latter consider the company – especially if it is public – as an entity that should primarily provide them with resources and opportunities.

For their part, French-language authors approach the figure of the Big Man from the standpoint of patrimonialism or neopatrimonialism. These monikers which, according to Jean-François Médard (1991), represent the real root of the "paradox of the African state", that is a state is both "strong and weak": strong in that it is authoritarian and broadly based on arbitrary action and violence applied outside any legal framework; and weak in that it is unable, despite its ability to do harm, to achieve the actual policy targets it sets itself, in particular those in the public interest.

An arbitrary nature is in fact one of the major features of the Big Man, especially when he manages a company. He is constantly combining the company's interests with his own personal ones and those of his "clientele", willingly exercises his strength and arbitrary action to illegally gather resources, but mitigates this strength and arbitrary action by being "kind", benevolent and "brotherly" with his fellows. Taking the analytical categories used by Hyden (2006), the company entrusted to the Big Man becomes a "purely personal" affair and the manager's power becomes his private property. This culminates in pure predation as the Big Man has no compunction in using his public position as a stipend from which he removes the resources which he uses for his personal gain and which he distributes to his clientele (Médard, 1991 and 2000).

When a manager with negative *evu* takes over from one with positive *evu*

As much as Gervais Mendo Ze was unanimously referred to as "humane", "receptive", "close to the people", "a manager who listens" and "truly implicated in the teams' daily work", his successor Amadou Vamoulké, who subsequently remained at the head of the company for 11 years, was judged for his "coldness", "austerity", "distance", "lack of sensitivity" and, very often, for his "selfishness" which in the *evu* psyche is clearly that of malice as the malicious person eats alone or does not want to give food to others or allow them to eat.

A former editorialist at CRTV wrote:

> "Amadou Vamoulké was a fairly solitary man who was less spontaneously generous than his predecessor Gervais Mendo Ze. He was quite cold even when interacting directly with others. When you met him, he remained quite unanimated which meant, in particular, that his waiting room was always empty".

So nobody went to see him because there was nothing to expect from it. This is confirmed by one of his former associates:

> "Vamoulké is a highly rational person [who is too calculating whereas a generous person should not be calculating], who shows no particular restiveness in relation to money. One of the things he discovered, namely the fact that the former director general handed out money to people without restraint, he put an end to because it was deeply shocking to him" [if he is shocked than he is not a true Big Man].

Therefore, as soon as he arrived, he began to send out strong signs, in particular by asking the board of directors to cut his salary in half. Such an action was unheard of in Cameroon. He was really focused on rationalisation which meant making life complicated for people. From the outset, he looked to transform both financial and human resources management. He wanted to dismantle these "sovereign" functions which was far from an easy task as they represented the two main redistribution channels.

So the new director general instigated a controversial strategy to upgrade management with an eye to reducing and regulating the company's expenditure. He wanted to bolster the predictability of operational targets, clearly identify human resources management tools and introduce a general framework for responsibility and accountability. This strategy led to him phasing out almost all the methods employed by the former system such as the "special cash budget" for the director general's private office to pay for day-to-day expenses. When talking about this "black" budget, the new director general told one of our sources:

> "I don't need it; put this money back into the company's accounts!" [Sacrilege! Rather than redistributing – like Mendo Ze – he behaved like a selfish person who refuses to give anything to others and, above all, he decided to deprive them of food].

According to his former secretary, he considered:

> "[…] that he was not there to hand out favours [food] to people and that, in any case, his expenses had to be accounted for. This meant that things were difficult, including for us. Even to have a bottle of water [threat of famine, thirst], the director general believed that the expenses had to be compliant with procedures [despised rationalism]. Therefore, overnight, there was a complete overhaul of the company's mores and practices".

The new director general's own employees soon began to call him a "Japanese handbrake" which stops the car, prevents it from moving and puts an end to the normal progress of things. In other words, the person who gives nothing or, at least refuses to give left, right and centre, will come out on the side of negative *evu*. This is demonstrated by the following account:

> "It wasn't easy to go into his office and get him to agree to an expense; it wasn't easy [pure selfishness, a malicious person]. When you came to see him for a certain reason which would incur expenses for the company, he tended to make the discussion highly technical about what should be done and always tried to find a reason to give you less money than you had asked for" [threat of going hungry].

Adopting "Western-style" management was an unforgivable error

The new director general "considered that we had had a permissive system for far too long [under exclusive Big Man rule], which had made people lose any notion of the nature and amount of expenses to be incurred for the company".

In an almost messianic role of righter of wrongs, Amadou Vamoulké began to seek out superfluous and unnecessary expenses, "which didn't make him any friends, far from it". So, according to a top manager who still works for the company:

> "When Vamoulké arrived, all those who received money during the time of Mendo Ze lost out [therefore they were people who were now hungry, who no longer had enough to eat] and were obviously frustrated. So with Vamoulké, there were two types of frustrated people: those who had been in Mendo Ze's circle and who had lost their benefits, and those who hoped to be part of a circle to be created by the new director general, though this never happened because the director general didn't follow through. He was therefore caught in the crossfire. People no longer ate and everyone was angry" [a company of famished people opposite a director general who ate alone].

Interviewees' accounts align concerning another aspect of the managerial strategy that the new boss wanted to introduce:

> "He tried to establish a connection between positions, the profile of the incumbents and people's motivation, and their commitment to performing well in these positions" [attempt at rationalisation].

This led, as soon as he took up his position, to the use of calls for applications for the company's main managerial roles, an approach that was once again unprecedented for the time and context. However, although innovative, the approach was hampered by the realities of an environment that was out of step with this type of model as explained by a member of the board of directors:

> "You can only have a call for applications if a principle of general governance is that competency is key to identifying, hiring and managing human resources. But, with a culture as "clientelist" as ours [therefore, where the general rule is to give food to people, to everyone, including incompetents], not only will you be prevented from completing the process but, even if you do complete it, it will nevertheless be tainted by a strong suspicion of manipulation. This was one of Vamoulké's worst mistakes as, ultimately, the pressure on him was so fierce [to remain within the bounds of "generosity"], to maintain the former patrimonial system where positions are given and not earned, that he himself ended up being embroiled in various manipulations of positions which destroyed the whole process he was initially aiming for to improve this specific aspect within the company".

The new manager was faced with the challenge of setting out and establishing impersonal rules for the company's daily management. Despite the pronunciations and attempts to salvage appearances, there was ultimately considerable doubt as to the partiality of these rules and their "mean-spiritedness", at the centre of the functions that many attribute to the company, i.e. being the venue for the fair allocation of "food". Vamoulké was therefore criticised for not having even understood how to manage such an organisation, which is closer in reality to a "ministry" [therefore, a place where you "eat" without necessarily working] than to a "real company" [where things are produced, where people are rational and where they do not necessarily "eat" any old way].

The same manager, who still works at the company, explained later in our interview:

> "CRTV is first and foremost the government, its interests and its operating methods. It's like another ministry. It bears no resemblance to a company, it's a ministry; nobody asks you to produce results in the economic sense of the term [no need for rationalism]. Everyone keeps an eye on CRTV, on the way it operates [so, everyone expects their share of food]: the Presidency of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Ministry for Communication and other power brokers. It's complicated. Vamoulké made the mistake of not really taking this into account [so, by not sharing], of thinking that being rational was enough to ensure that everything would be okay; he was wrong" [he did not understand and answer to the requirements of positive *evu*].

The new director general greatly underestimated the pressures that would come to bear on him, simply as a result of the position he held. The following are the words of a retired technical manager:

> "When you're director general of CRTV, you have to help people, give money to people, all the time. These are 'total social phenomena' which are such that you try to resist but they become binding on you to such an extent that you have no other choice but to give in".

This analysis is not only limited to the South Cameroonian forest. It also applies to other African regions south of the Sahara where the same expectations manifest themselves in the same manner, for instance in Côte d'Ivoire, if we are to believe the experience recounted by Zadi Kessy (2008) as manager of the *Société Ivoirienne des Eaux*. He says that by positioning yourself as the person who refuses to give people food, you obviously face "reprisals" from your circle.

With mysterious *evu*, any person, even a subordinate, can do harm, either in the formal order of the visible world or by dark manoeuvres in the obscure world of "malice", "witchcraft" and the "night". In this parallel world, the smallest in the order of power and material accumulation are potentially the strongest, the most powerful, the most harmful and destructive, with the uncontrollable power of negative *evu*. They are therefore to be feared by the Big Man.

The figure of the Big Man and the expectation of his generosity is therefore inherent to any position of grandeur. In fact, you do not accept the position without wearing its straitjacket: Vamoulké was a poor fit for the system, a man who – if truth be told – should not have been there because his way of doing things and, above all, the way in which he perceived his position as manager, was very far removed from what is generally considered normal in the country. He upset many interests [food], both inside and outside the company's scope. This is explained by a former journalist:

> "In which country can you manage a public company without looking to hire the children, friends and mistresses of those in your orbit? In which country?" [implication: the reprisals against him, with his imprisonment, were totally deserved, or at least legitimate in a system in which he failed to understand that the rule was not to manage but to give food to as many people as possible].

As another member of the board of directors recounts:

> "Amadou Vamoulké was a victim of his pretentiousness in wanting to rationalise things which are not, and which do not ask to be, rational. They only want to continue, not to produce any result".

He was even more the victim of this pretentiousness as, "ultimately", as one of his close associates who worked in his private office said, "he had no choice other than to resort to the practices which he himself had loudly denounced and for which he criticised his predecessor, Gervais Mendo Ze".

So, at the end of the day, nobody completely escapes from the rigours of *evu*.

Was Amadou Vamoulké a "wizard"?

As we have just seen with Amadou Vamoulké, unlike positive *evu* which is related to infinite generosity (Gervais Mendo Ze), negative *evu* is antisocial and "malicious". This *evu* is carried by a "man of the night", a "wizard" who possesses – by a mysterious or even mystic higher force – unlimited and indiscriminate capacity to harm.

This wizard "eats people" in the night using killing methods that fall outside the scope of mere mortals. This malicious and merciless *evu*, in that it attacks both the people in its orbit and those it does not know indifferently, is individualist by its very nature as its isolation and solitude are the very sign of its desire to destroy others.

Neutral people, who do not carry *evu*, are laypersons who do not have access to knowledge of magic and practices of the same dimension and, who, accordingly, are exposed to the manoeuvring and manipulation of possessors of *evu*. These people may be refused food or, worse still, be "eaten" themselves. Mallart-Guimera explains: "according to popular beliefs, non-possessors of *evu* are among the favourite victims of possessors of asocial *evu*, which pursues them relentlessly and in such a way that they cannot notice the bullying of which they are victim nor recognise the perpetrators" (p. 52).

In many sub-Saharan African countries, there has been a significant resurgence in beliefs based on the phenomenon of "witchcraft" (Chabal and Daloz, 1998). The phenomenon has widely spread to relations in the workplace. According to Peter Geschiere (1995 and 2000), it is not at all surprising that the minds of Africans, who are now nevertheless part of liberal globalisation, remain firmly anchored in their traditions. This author states that, broadly speaking, the discourse surrounding witchcraft provides both rich and poor with a preferred dialect for attempting to interpret modern changes. These are seen as both enigmatic and fascinating because they open up new horizons, but also as disappointing because very few people really have access to these new opportunities. "The conceptual link between 'witchcraft' and 'modernity' is being covered by academic studies due to the urgent need to better understand why this relationship is so persuasive for

the population. Having a better understanding of the impact of the tendency to explain modern changes – and the resulting inequalities – by occult forces therefore becomes a major issue" (2000, p. 19).

A look back at Gervais Mendo Ze's positive *evu* and his generosity

Gervais Mendo Ze enshrined, almost to the extreme, the figure and expectations built up around the African manager as a person who, more than others, must be in a position "to help".

> "He was a deeply generous person who could hand out money – and a lot of it – for no particular reason. Every morning people lined up in front of his gate to explain various problems to him which he settled there and then" (Former company executive).
>
> "He was someone who could give a substantial amount to someone that he didn't know at all; he had the habit of giving money. There are many stories about him leaving 500 French franc tips in restaurants when he visited Paris at the time! He really couldn't help himself" (Former communications manager with the company).
>
> "Gervais Mendo Ze is a person who built his managerial position as if he was the head of a family [who provides food for the others], someone who, as a result, was very generous. He was constantly moved by certain things" (Cameroonian journalist).
>
> "He always carried bundles of cash everywhere he went and he handed out money left, right and centre" (A former associate).

This behaviour can be classified as "emotional management" based on feelings. It implies that he really wanted to do good for people and not necessarily for the company – in this case, the company must be used for the director general's propensity to help people. He considered himself to be something of an emissary, a messiah who had come to accomplish a special task to relieve humanity of its suffering.

The issue is clearly that he could not automatically come up with the unlimited resources required by the position of the Big Man without taking them from the company he managed to the detriment of the latter. A close observer of this era explains:

> "He had transformed CRTV into a sort of counter from where he really did whatever he wanted which was, incidentally, seen as a good thing at the time".

Below is an anecdote in this respect, as told by a neighbour:

> "I remember one day when I met by chance in the lift one of my colleagues, who was a sales representative with one of the capital's urban channels. She was carrying the week's advertising revenue in cash and told me that she was first taking it to the director general! Imagine that, the bank was elsewhere and normally she should have gone directly to the bank to pay the cash in!"

According to an executive, this incident was part of a pattern:

> "At the time, there was a lot of money in the director general's office, a lot of cash" [cash is a key means for the manager to carry out their regular social work].

And there are many stories to substantiate this legend:

> "One day, he called me into his office for a work session and, as an aside, I told him that my grandmother had died. Then, without missing a beat, he leaned back in his chair whilst I was talking to him, put his hand in his pocket, discreetly counted out a few banknotes and gave them to me".
>
> "In the company, people where always on the lookout for him in the corridors. Everyone know that he couldn't go anywhere without leaving money. So people were always following him wherever he went. And when he came across four or five people in a corner, it was certain that he would give them a few banknotes".

As a result, obviously, as explains an employee who still works for CRTV, the "Mendo Ze style" went against the precautions required for sound management:

> "When something had to be done, he took the money within his reach, and did what he had to do with no regard for procedures".

This is why, for instance:

> "He gave regular bonuses for reasons that he alone identified without complying with the organisation's rules […] He identified himself so closely with his position that he struggled to separate what belonged to the company from what didn't".

A manager eaten up by affection and devoured by his court

The Big Man's generosity extended to hiring and human resources management.

> "He very regularly, or almost systematically, carried out fanciful 'family' recruitment; not family in the sense of his own family but in respect of the closeness that certain people could invoke in relation to him. He hired a large number of children and relatives of his friends, people who sang in his choir, who attended his church, a multitude of people who were his friends and acquaintances, and who he wanted to help by really presenting himself as the Son of the Virgin Mary. He was irrational and he hated reason and rationalism".
>
> "People were appointed to management positions with no rhyme or reason, mainly on the basis of the friendship, closeness and affection shown to the director general. […] Mendo Ze was a man who liked to be surrounded, flattered and loved. To exist alongside him and reap the benefits, you had to constantly celebrate him, praise him. He wanted to have everyone but obviously this was impossible. He therefore contented himself with a group of associates whose lives he controlled. This was how it was. He needed to see them when he arrived at work, in the evening for dinner in his home, at the weekend in the village and, for the luckiest, on assignments abroad. Together they made up a community; the cleverest benefited from this whilst the others were happy with the small amount of transient glory this gave them. Of course, this was all funded by the company's resources which he considered, to some extent rightly, to be his own".

This led to many absurd situations:

> "He had real trouble with prioritising. For him, it wasn't necessarily the company's actual needs that counted but the quality of his relationships with the people concerned by these issues. So, if two managers were causing problems for him, he would first deal with those

caused by the person he felt the closest to, without any consideration for the nature or seriousness of the problems that actually needed to be settled. As a result, there were sometimes absurd decisions: there were two of us in the same office and we both needed chairs but he bought one for one person but not for the other. […] There was no logic to his management style and this created a lot of frustration. […] Broadly speaking, he handled everything according to his personal feelings and it was on this sole basis that he allotted the company's resources. This meant that the production expenses for television programmes were very poorly allocated. It wasn't that he didn't know how much it cost to produce real programmes but, if things were not done for his own benefit and glory, then he wasn't interested. Basically, Mendo Ze used national television to serve Biya [the President of the Republic] and to serve himself" (Former news manager).

Consequently:

"CRTV soon found itself with more than 2,000 employees, half of whom served no purpose". "This was a heavy burden for his successor because, when you take over from such a manager, what should you do? Do you go so far as to sack all these people to bring the company back into line with the risk of creating a serious social, or even political, crisis? How can we talk about performance levels in these circumstances?"

The situation was even more difficult to handle as the newly appointed director general also hired people he knew, to assemble his own court. This was not necessarily because he wanted to but because the social pressure to do so was strong and his own friends and relatives also expected favours from him. This results in an endless race as the whole country, the entire system, is like this.

Agency theory and its application to Africa

The appointment of the manager of a public company in Cameroon – and elsewhere in Africa – is by means of an unequivocal decision from the President of the Republic using "discretionary power" (Chauvet, 2009). In most cases, this appointment is seen as a "gift" from the holder of the supreme power to reward – and, therefore, to "give food" to – their friends and relatives under patrimonial arrangements flagged up by Médard (1986). This means that, as they have not shown any particular merit or specific skills to take up this privileged position, in order to deserve this "reward", the manager of a public company or organisation is not really expected to "work" and obtain results but rather to redistribute this "food" that they themselves may have gathered, more or less unduly. This is part of "community solidarity": the perpetuation of this expectation is ultimately greater than it may initially appear. In Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and even Mozambique, this has been widely highlighted by previous works. In a note to the reader on the work of Marcel Zadi Kessy which was published in 1998, Alain Henry (1999) already commented on this persistent aspect, by quoting the author who claims that a person who refuses to abide by these rules is "put in the prisoner's dock by their fellows and runs the

risk of marginalisation and exclusion, or even reprisals […] that, usually, make them fall into line" (Zadi Kessy, p. 19).

In the case at hand, the director general of CRTV is therefore the representative, the agent of the country's highest authority, as well as being the agent for the population of "brothers" and "friends" who consider themselves to be more or less hired due to him holding this position.

In the first definition of an agency relationship that he puts forward, S. A. Ross (1973) states that: "We will say that an agency relationship has arisen between two (or more) parties when one, designated as the agent, acts for, on behalf of, or as representative for the other, designated the principal, in a particular domain of decision problems". This means that the director general of a public company in Cameroon is both an agent in their relations with the President of the Republic whose roadmap they implement as well as being an agent for the social group to which they are connected. This is why, for instance, they have no choice but to continue with the expansive human resources policy, consisting of never-ending hiring, even if everything points to a different approach being required. So, Amadou Vamoulké was criticised for wanting to roll out a hiring system based on skills and calls for applications that he could not stick to in any case as numerous stakeholders underline the fact that "the pressure was too great".

To Alain Henry who wondered: "*Peut-on redresser une entreprise africaine en respectant la parole des ancêtres* ?" (1988), we would reply in the negative based on our case study of Vamoulké: an African company cannot be reorganised without respecting the words of the forefathers. In spite of his strong assertion that "Africa is failing because of its management", Bourgoin (1984) is ultimately less inflammatory in his recommendations. In his opinion, despite the destabilising nature of certain of its cultural traits which are the most inconsistent with capitalism and the introduction of "best management practices", heritage, the cultural context, should nevertheless be taken into account rather than denied or ignored. In addition, far from renouncing their identities, African executives should, on the contrary, draw on them bearing in mind that no recipe or model can be displaced from one country to the other for the simple reason that people, even if they resemble each other, are different. Hernandez (2022) concurs with this and goes so far as to designate this 21st century as potentially Africa's century and, therefore, that there will be a dramatic transformation of its capitalism and management practices.

Gervais Mendo Ze had mapped out a route that Vamoulké wanted to get off, unfortunately for him. Not only because his reforms and "modern management" were neither understood nor accepted by his teams and the rest of the company, but also because he himself became embroiled in the practices which characterised the "old era" from which he claimed to be freeing the company.

The "words of the forefathers", channelled by this evu, therefore become a solid underlying structure which gives birth, meaning and consistency to everything. These are "timeless" words, as emphasised by Henry (ibid., p. 89), and which, accordingly, are passed down through the generations. Among other reasons for which it is important to take account of what Iribarne (1998) calls the "framework of meaning", is this system of values which, according to Hofstede (1994, p. 24), makes individuals prefer "certain states of affairs over others". Values, he continues, define good vs evil, clean vs dirty, beautiful vs ugly, natural vs unnatural, normal vs abnormal, logical vs paradoxical and rational vs irrational. This is a system of representations that identifies Gervais Mendo Ze as the preferential figure of African management who allows for a more harmonious, but much more paradoxical, link between the capitalistic entity and the African company.

One of the non-negligible limits of this paper is that it is striving to establish a general rule for "African" management or for "African companies" based not only on a specific case, but on a public company. In the majority of sub-Saharan African countries, in particular French-speaking ones, the dominant features found at CRTV are likely to manifest themselves – based on the same physiognomy – as mentioned, notably, in Henry's prior works on the subject. Nevertheless, it is obvious that not all companies – including those that are state-owned – are managed in this way. Most Western companies with operations on the continent attempt, insofar as possible, to abide by the universally accepted principles of good corporate governance.

As established by a large number of works (especially Godong, 2011 on the Americans of AES having taken over the business of the former *Société nationale d'électricité du Cameroun* and the French Bolloré Group controlling the country's railways), there is a bitter struggle to reach an acceptable balance between the Western/rational side of management and its "African" side which is primarily focused on the "affection economy". Even with strategies in which immense effort is made to lay down new governance rules, resistance to them remains high.

The two very different figures of Gervais Mendo Ze and Amadou Vamoulké demonstrate the difficult pursuit by Africans, African companies and Africa-based foreign firms to come up with an ideal of what a "good manager" or "good management" should be. When we questioned them, both managers and experts replied that the right balance is "between the two styles".

> "I think we need a combination of both; you can't be decisive in this respect and say that such and such a method should be used. You cannot be totally in a 'village chief' mindset nor totally in a rational frame of mind. It's not easy in the context of CRTV. There are times when the company got away with it because, thanks to informal management methods, Mendo Ze opened a hidden door or window when the main door had been closed. If things blocked in one place, he went the other way. It's the result that counts. With Vamoulké's rational method, if you get closed in in one place, you will stay there and say that 'this has been laid down by law'. That's no good because, again, it's the result that counts. That's why I say that you need

> a combination of both by from time to time stepping down from your pedestal of straight-laced manager and getting your hands dirty. Because, and it has to be said, things work a bit like that in this country" (Incumbent senior executive).

Similarly, a member of the board of directors states:
> "There is no ideal profile for managing this company. As things stand, we cannot do things rationally at CRTV. Because, not only are there no standards, neither governmental nor in-house, concerning what 'sound management' that complies with universal principles should be – and therefore, relating to any 'performance levels' – there is, in this company, a tradition of clientelism that is so firmly anchored that it is impossible to dismantle it in a short period of time and get results. It is not the individuals who are at fault, otherwise Vamoulké would have been the best possible manager. But we need to reassess CRTV's social utility and introduce more objective assessment criteria such as the hourly cost of a broadcast programme. If we do that then we are starting to address the problem. In that case, you can take any company and have it managed by anyone. So, the managers and the resources do exist. But the problem lies in all the rest that needs managing. These organisations see themselves as ministries and their managers mimic to the point of travesty the members of the government (they have a private office, bodyguards and concealed finances, etc.). There is scope for reforming public entities but, every day, we wonder how to do it, where to start and, ultimately, nobody ever does anything".

At Cameroon's finance ministry, there is a unit called the "Technical commission for monitoring and overhauling public companies" (CTR) which is tasked with overseeing the overall development of these entities with regard to performance levels, governance and finances. Its recommendations are only issued ex post and often too late. In addition, the Cameroonian authorities do not appear to necessarily act on them to promote or sanction managers. As seen in the case of CRTV, the selection and appointment of managers, and even their roadmap and the appraisal of their work, is still an unreadable black box.

In early 2020, a scandal at the African Development Bank again led to the indictment of "clientelist" management. The head of the bank, the Nigerian Akinwumi Adesina was ultimately cleared after an internal inquiry, but this fresh scandal demonstrates the extent to which this issue is sensitive, including in such an institution which is renowned for the supposed soundness of its board of directors and its professionalism, but in which the employees felt obliged to report a large number of suspicious practices by their "boss": crossover between the bank's interests and his private ones, preferential treatment for "Nigerian brothers", suspicions of "corruption".[2]

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[2] Joan Tilouine and Yassin Ciyow: "A la Banque africaine de développement, le président Adesina contesté par des employés", Le Monde, published on 5 April 2020.

CONCLUSION

Despite the never completed "transplant" of the state (Bayart, 1996) and its continued inability to rationalise peripheral companies, the times are changing, both under the pressure of capitalist rules imposed by globalisation and the emergence, at local level, of an increasing demand for better managers who are able to more effectively meet targets for the production of both public and market goods.

> "Increasingly, at local level, managers like Mendo Ze are being challenged and regularly arrested and jailed, as managers who are stricter, more rigorous and who perform better are receiving much more acclaim" (A Cameroonian journalist).

Cameroonian society is at this indecisive tipping point, lurching between the persistent pessimism felt by many – like Kamdem (2000), that "the modern company is a reality far removed from traditional African cultures" – and the optimism of a few fanatics who consider, on the contrary, that the continent certainly has future possibilities offered by international capitalism. It is nevertheless both exaggerated and presumptuous to predict the imminent disappearance of the Big Man who still has a bright future – especially in public companies – despite international recommendations for "good governance" which many hope will be one of the measures, if not the main measure, which tomorrow's Africa can implement to find its way in the competitive environment of nations.

As the fault lines erode between protectionism and openness, between local approaches to conducting business and integration in the global system of trade in goods, services and capital, overly-specific strategies and representations tend to be replaced by more universalist methods. In *Les cinq capitalismes*, Bruno Amable posits that there are "grammars" and therefore different business practices depending on geographical and cultural areas. However, in the list he puts forward, there is no mention of Africa and Africans, who are implicitly considered as hardly being part of history and the dominant dynamics. It is down to the women and men who manage the continent's companies to come up with – as flows of foreign direct investment increase – a way of correlating the socio-anthropological expectations of local populations with the longstanding rules that have led to material and cultural prosperity in other parts of the world.

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Decolonising management science: The insights of three Global South scholars

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In France, the two types of debate currently running through postcolonial studies revolve around its supposed dominance and the origins and activism of its scholars. Such debates have caused a stir in the media but do not get to the heart of the foundational themes of this academic discipline.
There are also more fundamental questions of interest to those looking to contribute to "decolonising" management science.
This paper first aims to take stock of these debates, choosing to focus on major controversies instead of the media circus.
By examining three fundamental questions, all while avoiding a North-South controversy, we seek to show that a number of Global South scholars, namely G. Spivak, A. Quijano and A. Mbembe, have insights that are helpful to understanding these issues in the management science field.

"Postcolonial" and "decolonial" theories[1] regularly generate controversy in France. [2]

French researchers and intellectuals are pressured to "choose a side": either agree with postcolonial/decolonial theories, or sign petitions denouncing their presumed dominance.

As is often the case, the heart of the issues at stake gets lost in the media fog.

Moving past the exchange of insults between sides, isn't it time to take another look at the specific points of the controversy?

Some usefully reference the "courage of nuance" (in French: *courage de la nuance*, title of the book by J. Birnbaum, 2021) in an era where everyone revels in taking the most extreme stance possible. On a subject like the decolonisation of thought (or of management science, in our case), can we add nuance to the debate by dialling down the overreactions and zeroing in on the real issues at hand?

"Postcolonial" studies is a complex academic discipline developed by Indian, Caribbean, Latin American and African scholars critical of the European philosophical tradition. It analyses the status of peoples from the Global South as one of symbolic and political dependence under colonialism. It encourages new ways of thinking rid of the abstract universalism allegedly imposed by the West and emphasises the importance of local knowledge.

It was a welcome new line of intellectual inquiry and produced inspiring scholarship as early as the 2000s, first in the United States, the United Kingdom, India and certain African countries. Postcolonial studies also took root in Latin America at the impetus of sociologists and scholars lesser known in Europe.

The foundational scholars in postcolonial studies emerged in the 1970s and 80s (Said, Bhabha and Spivak). In the management science field, postcolonial thinking started to gain ground in the 2000s (Prasad, 1997 and 2003; Banerjee, 2001), but unevenly from one area of study and continent to the next, with most scholars writing in English (Ibarra Colado, 2006; Alcadipani, Khan, Gantman & Nkomo, 2012; Gantman, Yousfi & Alcadipani, 2015; Ozkazanc-Pan, 2015; Grey, Huault, Perret & Taskin, 2016).

Going beyond the histrionics and France's specific political backdrop, the current debates provide, in our view, an opportunity to lay the foundations for an actual discussion which could contribute to reviving intellectual inquiry on these issues in a management science context. A wide range of arguments are advanced in these debates: some are resoundingly

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[1] For the sake of simplicity, our paper does not distinguish between these two disciplines, which may be seen as differing somewhat.

[2] This article was translated by the Translation Center of the French Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty

controversial,[3] while others bring into focus some real problems with postcolonial studies. Some arguments date back over 20 years, and others still come from more recent clashes.

Several criticisms are frequently levied against postcolonial studies:

• It does not have a unified theory

Certain scholars critique postcolonial studies for its "disarray" (Taguieff, 2021).

The diversity of postcolonial studies has never been in doubt, and many of its scholars wear this plurality as a badge of honour. Few discuss "postcolonial theory" in the singular (Bancel & Blanchard, 2017). From scholars linked to subaltern studies to feminists, not to mention comparisons of Indian and Latin American scholars among themselves, it is apparent that many different subgroups exist, corresponding to different socio-historical contexts, for example. However, there is no denying that postcolonial studies draws on a common set of ideas revolving around the relationships between capitalism, colonial conquest and racism.

• "It isn't new"

It is indeed ironic that a discipline which criticises the monopoly of European philosophy sometimes clearly and extensively draws on the likes of Nietzsche, Adorno, Derrida and Foucault. Bayart (2010) demonstrates that a substantial body of scholarship predating post-colonial studies highlighted some of the themes it covers, both from the perspective of anticolonialism (Césaire, Fanon, Memmi and Sartre) and history (empire building). Bayart also argues that postcolonial studies was not met with as much negativity in France as is commonly claimed. In his view, giving credit to the discipline's forerunners and pioneers would prevent it from being lauded for originality and encourage its theorists to show more restraint.

When it comes to management science, the spread of the reassessment of colonialism and the acknowledgement of the dominance of Western models are relatively new developments. In the 1970s and 80s, most professor-researchers were educated in North America and the Global South had no standing in the realm of research and teaching. Entire branches of management science were imported to Europe from the United States, undermining, incidentally, past schools of thought and methods, including French ones. Management historians have only very recently rediscovered these intellectual contributions (Poivret, 2018). After Europe, Global North scholarship was exported to other continents.

• Researchers or activists?

The Human and Social Sciences community in France has recently contended with a heated debate over the age-old problem of the respective roles of researchers and activists. Many people took stances and signed petitions advocating each side, with some defending the standard roles of activist researchers and others endorsing axiological neutrality (Heinich, 2021). In the field of management science, which rarely addresses these issues, the debate has ushered in the concept of "critical performativity" (Huault et al., 2017) and field research methods, such as participatory action research, that bring together members of the social sector and seek to combine research and tangible action. As important as they may be, these issues are neither new nor specific to the group of intellectual who support decolonising management science.

Going beyond the debates about postcolonial studies' importance, originality, American origins, reception in France and lack of restraint, some fundamental questions have been raised and should, in our view, inform management science researchers.

We divide them into three groups which have been explored by Global South scholars (regardless of whether they align themselves with postcolonial studies). In other words, we find that their writings already provide guidance and cautionary advice that would be eminently beneficial to those looking to rid management of hegemonic patterns.

Leaving aside cyclical disputes, these intellectuals' views help avoid some of the impasses we see today. As the African philosopher E. M. Mbonda puts it, "such an undertaking should gauge the impasses, traps and ruses to be able to stave them off or thwart them" (2021, p. 245[4]).

Our paper draws on three scholars with a complex message pointing the way forward for postcolonial studies while also calling attention to its potential pitfalls. All are from the three main cultural hubs of the intellectual Global South (India, Latin America and Africa).

We address the following three groups of question:

• The first involves giving a voice to marginalised populations and recognising the value of indigenous cultures, with Spivak providing insights into these questions
• The second involves the system of colonial domination as a main analytical tool, with Quijano offering his insights
• The third involves the trend of epistemological relocation and the associated risk of becoming closed off, with Mbembe's serving as our guide

Giving a voice to the "subaltern" without essentialising them: Spivak's insights

Do we not run the risk of stereotyping or encouraging an artificial dichotomy of dominator versus dominated, clearing the conscience of researchers identifying with, quite naturally, the "right" side? What do we mean when we refer to marginalised, "subaltern"

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[3] Our paper refrains from addressing such academic controversies as the purportedly dubious credentials of postcolonial scholars, the fact that some individuals have made a lucrative career out of it and the formal quality of postcolonial research.

[4] Note from the translator: Page numbers always refer to the versions of the texts indicated in the bibliography.

populations? And how should researchers conduct themselves, particularly if they are from the Global North, to establish a connection with them? These are just some of the questions directed at postcolonial theorists regarding the groups of people overlooked by the social sciences.

Researchers' more or less artificial support of the "cause" of the populations they are studying has long been an issue for anthropologists. The fascination and affinity that develop between researchers and the group they are living with and getting their information from has frequently been studied. In the context of management science, it is clear that the close relationship professor-researchers have with business leaders (who may even fund their research) makes for findings that are hardly neutral. Management science is faced with the major challenge of becoming more inclusive of other populations, include those overlooked until now, but having said that, it should not fall victim to the same pitfalls as anthropologists once did.

This risk has already been noted. Olivier de Sardan (2008), for instance, uses "cognitive populism" to refer to the pseudo-"discovery" of a people by the researcher and the resulting moral reaction to it. Subsequently, in describing the people's "misery", the researcher adopts a "miserabilist" posture that takes the form of two registers which can be complementary: a posture of "compassion" and a posture of "denunciation" (Olivier de Sardan, 2008, p. 228).

Management science needs to open up, unless it is content to join the ranks of the social sciences which "pay no significant attention to the fact that societies are profoundly divided and inegalitarian and that a high percentage of their population is excluded from power, knowledge, or wealth" (op. cit., p. 227). International management scholars have, for example, called on the research community to be more "inclusive", with Prasad (2016) asking "How might we study international business to account for marginali[s]ed subjects?" and "How can we make such knowledge serve in the interests of the many—the 'two-thirds world' […]—rather than in the interest of the few in the 'one-third world'?" (Jack et al., 2008, p. 881). Basically, how can we be inclusive without being miserabilist?

Through her complex, evolving work, Spivak[5] provides two main insights into these questions.

Spivak quite naturally draws attention to "the subaltern",[6] i.e. those (and particularly women) who, in addition to being dominated, have no collective identity.

They are not at the bottom of the social ladder but outside of it. They are the "nameless" who have nowhere to express themselves. They can physically speak (which answers the book title's question) but cannot be heard, according to Spivak. They do not have a class consciousness: "The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern" (p. 132). They are "[o]n the other side of the international division of labo[u]r" and, as women, are "doubly in the shadow" (p. 68). Spivak means Bengali peasants as well as all other populations on the margins of the global economic system, including domestic and service-sector workers. We can add to this list sailors aboard Flag of Convenience ships, miners in illegal mines, construction workers in the informal sector, Pakistani workers in the United Arab Emirates and Singapore, etc. – those who do not show up in any statistical "dashboard". These subalterns are, in this instance, women: "the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow", Spivak writes (p. 65). On top of their social domination, they are dominated by an oppressive patriarchal system.

Nevertheless, in reality the subaltern population is diverse and they should not be "essentialised" as inherently marginalised individuals. The point is not to ascribe to them a sort of purity entailing the limitless support of the intellectual taking up their cause.[7] Moreover, Spivak adopts a harsh stance towards out-of-touch intellectuals (particularly Westerners) who, believing themselves to be supporting a moral cause, are only perpetuating a condescending view of the "other". As Spivak argues, the researcher's usual position, relying on the "native informant" with whom the Northern researcher sympathises but sees as a completely "exotic other", does not actually give a voice to local populations or allow the researcher to listen to them. For this reason, other forms of cooperation and coproduction of knowledge should be explored.

It is therefore important to factor in this "subalternisation" of (many) populations, but by recontextualising them in both economic and ideological "macrostructures".

Nor does getting the "subaltern" – and thus often indigenous populations – to speak necessarily involve, according to Spivak, delving into the past. A large branch of postcolonial studies, consistent with the critique of Eurocentrism, seeks to promote ancient knowledge. The return of African languages, the revival of ancestral Aboriginal wisdom and the use of Native American ritual practices, for example, are presented as alternatives to imported European models. In the management science context, this "nativist" branch has introduced "authentic" forms of organisation that draw on original cultural principles. A number of avenues have been proposed, such as Indian-style trust management (Nayar, 2011), pastoral democracy (Moussa Lye, 2014), *ubuntu* communitarianism (Mangaliso, 2001), the spiritual revolution of Afrotopia (Sarr, 2016), and indigenous methodologies and statistics (Kovach, 2009).

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[5] Born in 1942, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has translated work by Derrida. A Professor of Literature at Columbia University and former colleague of E. Said, her most famous work is *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), which was translated into French in 1999 and 2020 (the latter edition being referenced in our paper). She does not consider herself to be a postcolonial theorist, even though major scholars of postcolonial studies frequently cite her work.

[6] The term "subaltern" originally comes from A. Gramsci and was "discovered" by R. Guha's (1923) Subaltern Studies Group. It was used from the founding of this "school" in the 1970s. For more on how Gramsci's work is used in management science, see F. Palpacuer & N. Balas (2009).

[7] Spivak does not agree with the position taken in recent writings by scholars with decolonial leanings, such as N. Ajari (2019), who asserts the existence of a special essence (of "Black life", in this case) related to the conditions of "indignity" which outstrips all other divisions.

While this research is consistent with the necessary goal of decentring and provides a number of insights, at times it is based on the belief that focusing on local values and knowledge (often handed down from the past) will ensure the relevance and efficiency of the solutions put forward.

Spivak argues that "reverse ethnocentrism" should be avoided, as it is motivated by nostalgia for a pre-colonial purity that is largely a myth anyway.

She goes further, seeing, based on the Indian case, this "return to the homeland" as an argument used by the post-independence elites to "ensure the continuation of their power after the colonisers were gone". It also serves as a way to legitimise the nation-state as the inevitable system under which action takes place,[8] when, as she points out, supranational solutions should be explored.

Identity politics is a trap to be avoided (Spivak, University of California video conference, 2008). Spivak went as far as leaving the Subaltern Studies Group[9] because she felt it was going in an overly backward-looking and essentialist direction.

Along the same lines, Hurtado-Lopez writes that "[t]he idealisation of the subaltern amounts to a simple reversal of Eurocentrism" (2017, p. 48).

Using a colonial perspective suited to contemporary contexts and without a single model: Quijano's insights

If we constantly view history under the lens of colonialism, doesn't that serve to suspend history in a period that ended long ago? Aren't the colonial origins of some societies on the verge of disappearing? Doesn't postcolonial studies ultimately crystallise the idea that there was only one unequivocal, universal experience of colonialism, responsible for every woe? Consequently, doesn't it articulate a mechanistic vision of the processes of domination, replacing "class conflict" with a conflict of peoples with the same characteristics of a social-historical "law" from which no one can escape?

Cooper (2009) views colonialism merely as a form of imperialism, a much broader phenomenon than Europe's 19th-century relations with Africa and other overseas territories (such as the Russian and Ottoman empires). In this wider vision, forms of political and social organisation vary considerably. For one thing, colonised populations did not remain idle and played a role in shaping certain parts of the societies in question. Bayart (2010) refers to postcolonial studies' "reifica-

tion" of colonialism, noting that the field overlooks the specific historical contexts of regions and countries as significantly different as the Caribbean, India and sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, it is "obsessive in its reinterpretation of history" (Taguieff, 2020).

We can use A. Quijano's body of work to avoid at least some of the pitfalls highlighted by different scholars.

Quijano, a Peruvian sociologist,[10] argues that while political colonialism had effectively disappeared since the success of Latin American independence movements, the colonial structure of these societies persists. In his view, colonisation consolidated the first "world-system" in history: global capitalism, which at that time acquired an unrivalled structural coherence.

Quijano uses the concept of "coloniality of power" to refer to a set of forms of power that contribute to the persistence of a concentration of economic, social and cultural power.

More than an extensive historical analysis, Quijano puts forward a tool for analysing societies, made up of four inextricably linked elements:

• The control of work and labour (formerly slavery and today taking the form of insecure and informal employment and the exploitation of farming communities)
• The control of authority (revolving around the nation-state, a necessary component of capitalism)
• The control of sex (revolving around the heterosexual family)
• The control of intersubjectivity (models imposed from the outside at the expense of indigenous cultures)

In management science, the concept of coloniality of power can help us examine the methods of organisation and control used by certain multinational companies, as well as the ideological influence of managerial orthodoxy, which has spread globally. Quijano emphasises that our mentalities are pervaded by supposedly universal patterns. His main contribution is that he shows how this coloniality of power produces "social classifications" regarding production, gender and race. Race is, he argues, the most recent and least theorised distinction. It is indeed unexplored by management science research, even in a subfield such as international and intercultural management where it would seem to be more relevant (Jack et al., 2008). He adds that race is "the most efficient instrument of social domination produced in the last 500 years" (Quijano, 2020).

For Quijano, this does not mean that the forms of control are identical everywhere and correspond to a single model. All these elements of control exist elsewhere and were historically known, but are in a sense being reused

[8] The current political situation in India, under the leadership of N. Modi, seems to prove her point.

[9] Note that the Subaltern Studies Group, created by R. Guha in the 1970s, originally brought together Indian and British PhD students keen to reclaim the historiography of the working classes. G. Spivak jointly edited with R. Guha a number of the 11 volumes of collected works produced by the collective between 1983 and 2000. A selection of these works, titled *A Subaltern Studies Reader 1986-1995*, was published in 1997 by the University of Minnesota.

[10] Anibal Quijano (1928-2018) was a leading Latin American postcolonial theorist who in 1992 began participating in the renowned Modernity/Coloniality Group alongside R. Grosfoguel, W. Mignolo and S. Castro-Gomez, among others. The quotations of his work appearing herein were translated from the original Spanish into French by the author of this paper. A chapter is dedicated to both Quijano and Spivak in the French-language anthology *Les grands auteurs à la frontière du management* (M. Bidan and Y. F. Livian, Éditions EMS, 2022).

to advance the interests of capitalists. Quijano's definition of power is therefore neither that of a capacity held monopolistically by a single social group (as Marxists defined it) nor that of a diffuse and fluid phenomenon, as in the postmodernist view.

Nor does the "coloniality of power" mean that there is a stable, dominant model that individuals have no possibility of changing. Conflicts do arise between social actors and can bring about new arrangements.

Accordingly, it is not about exposing a general, unequivocal model and trying to replace it with another one: Quijano is wary of "major systems". Researchers have to get out in the field and "observe [people's] social action, their relationships and the processes in which they participate" (Quijano, 2020, p. 305).

Postcolonial global capitalism reemploys methods already observed at other times in history, but articulates them so as to advance its objectives. Current forms of labour control, clearly historicised by Quijano, refer to contemporary realities: not only the wage-labour relation (on which Marxism has focused too exclusively, according to Quijano), but also the informal employment system in the Global South, pseudo-"independent" employment, insecure jobs and the 40 million people still living in slavery (based on a 2016 report from the International Labour Organization).

Quijano's work thus addresses some of the criticisms levelled at a postcolonial vision for supposedly being monolithic and ahistorical.

Decentring from the West towards a new universalism: Mbembe's insights

Doesn't putting the West at a distance mean favouring a return to compartmentalised knowledge? Doesn't claiming an identity, however legitimate of a claim it may be, mean abandoning the search for a (human, scientific) community?

Mbembe[11] agrees with the critical analysis of capitalism laid out by postcolonial scholars and, like Quijano, highlights the production of racial hierarchies linked to colonisation and the triumph of capitalism, accomplished in the name of "universal" values. But he puts forward a modern vision, observing that the condition of "the Black man" (i.e. a being who has been stripped of all identity) is becoming the most common state in a globalised world: "[A]ll those currently viewed by the neoliberal economic order as forming a surplus of humankind" (2014, p. 73).

According to Mbembe, we are living in an economic system that exploits not only new territories (colonies) but its very home base in that it exploits workers and resources. "[C]apitalism […] recoloni[ses] its own cent[re]" (Mbembe, 2013, p. 257). What is referred to as "subalternisation" following Spivak's work is here "the becoming black of the world" (idem, p. 257), i.e. the

fact that the state of discrimination and insecurity under which "Blacks" lived during colonialism has become the lot of every population group (he recently reiterated this idea using the notion of "brutalism" (2020) as a system universalising extraction and predation). While there is cause for revolt regarding this "becoming black of the world", a number of pitfalls should be avoided that he sees as particularly prevalent in the postcolonial studies orbit. First, overly sharp dichotomies (dominator/dominated, emancipation/subjugation) are to be dispensed with. Taking the case of Africa, the power gained after independence movements also involved violence, including fratricide. What Mbembe describes as the "postcolony" (2020) is a "private government" in which the new independent elites seize resources, sometimes with the complicity of the people, who are themselves prone to "the stupefaction experienced in pleasure".

As Mbembe puts it, "[…] by insisting too much on difference and alterity, this current of thought [postcolonialism] has lost sight of the weight of the fellow human (*le semblable*) without whom it is impossible to imagine an ethics of the neighbour" (p. 17). Today's world should disregard borders and encourage mobility.

Consequently, Mbembe believes it is out of the question to succumb to the temptation of Afrocentrism: "We have to move beyond the issue of origin and enclosure" (2017, p. 385). Most of us, he points out, have multiple affiliations (at times including Western influences).

The perpetual return to origins and to authenticity only ends up "encourag[ing] Africans to think of themselves as victims of history" (2017, p. 390). Mbembe argues that we need to abandon our obsession with identity and work on forging "common ground". We have to "accept cosmopolitanism" (p. 385) and work to improve the movement of people and ideas.

This building of a new "universal", rid of the hegemonic ambitions of the West, should incorporate the practice of sharing, a "mutuali[s]ation of knowledge", following the example of African cultures, he adds, which "have been shaped by movement and mobility". Hence his critical stance on a number of postcolonial works he judges "outdated" and "which serve for nothing more than appeasing the conscience of the ones performing such charity, and which cultivate in the recipients of such gifts a logic of resentment and a posture of irresponsibility" (2017, p. 390).

Conclusions

This paper has sought to show that, going deeper than recent media debates, non-Western scholars provide insights into the fundamental questions raised by postcolonial studies and caution against the potential for impasse.

Drawing on the work of major Global South scholars, some promising avenues for decolonising management science include (i) research that takes marginalised populations into account, while avoiding the pitfalls of exclusivity and populism; (ii) a socio-historical analysis of capitalism that incorporates race but does not

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[11] Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian philosopher born in 1967, is Research Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa) and a Visiting Professor at Duke University.

promote a single model; and (iii) a perspective decentred from the West, but "pluriversal". These avenues appear to avoid what could be considered the early problems of postcolonial studies, such as nostalgia for the past and identity-based division.

Our paper is not comprehensive and more work in the same vein should be conducted. In the research sphere, two trends have recently raised serious questions:

• The casting of doubt on science in general and clumping it together with Western domination, a point of view that has been spread by some postcolonial scholars, are bound to cause concern. Without even evoking "white reason", we observe how some researchers have gone too far in claiming that any form of science is colonial. The colonisers "built prisons, slums / Laboratories and roads", writes, for instance, an Australian [sic] researcher (Smith, 2020); (scientific) research being one of the ways by which imperialism took place, in her view.

Moreover, research methodologies should "privilege the voices and goals of indigenous populations" (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Aside from the fact that such an "indigenous methodology" approach dispenses entirely with critical distance and research freedom, it is putting scholars under the obligation to speak on behalf of their community (and their community only),[12] thus running the risk of an "identity assignment" (Roudinesco, 2021). Some consider that such an individualistic approach to research is, ironically, in line with the neoliberal ideology condemned elsewhere (MAUSS, 2018).

• The negative, if not downright "declinist" tone of postcolonial writings has also sparked a wide backlash. The Algerian writer K. Daoud once described postcolonialism as "stifling" him (Le Point, 2017, cited by Gauthier in the French journal MAUSS). And for the Cameroonian philosopher J.G. Bidima, "[p] ostcolonial studies prevents us from thinking about the collective" (2020). Without abandoning a critical stance, a number of scholars feel it is time to rediscover "the good, the just and the beautiful" (the title of a special edition of MAUSS, a journal that is far from a bastion of neoliberalism, published in the first half of 2018), so as to bring about a "generous, creative and anti-utilitarian" critique.

While making sure to avoid these pitfalls, the work to contextualise and historicise management science must continue to be undertaken: for example, by incorporating overlooked dimensions (gender, race), by recontextualising international management practices in Global North-South power dynamics, and by opening up institutions and research methods to a more diverse array of continents and languages.

At any rate, the postcolonial perspective in management science should be seen more as a space for inquiry than as the "single, better alternative to existing management theories" (Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006). This space should be one where topical fundamental

questions can be explored once secondary disputes have been set aside. This space is essential today if we want to succeed in "elevating" management science to a field that is broadened, open and multipolar.

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[12] At symposiums and conferences on indigenous methodologies, which are held frequently in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, researchers often begin their talk by indicating which tribe they belong to.

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