How do Customers-Employees interactions influence Organizational Change ? A Theoretical Framework

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Summary: The goal of this theoretical piece of research is to conceptualize the role of customers in the process of organizational change, which has not been explored in organizational research so far. In particular, we wish to shed light on the micro-processes and interactions between customers and firms' employees in initiating, enabling and producing organizational change. Noting the absence of the customer in organizational literature, the paper adopts a transdisciplinary perspective as it analyzes and combines academic literature on organizational change on the one hand, and on services marketing and management on the other hand, to build a conceptual model of the influence of customers on organizational change dynamics. By adopting a transdisciplinary perspective to reintegrate customers as "partial employees", this paper is apparently the first to provide insights on how customers-employees local interactions may affect organizational change dynamics. An integrative framework based on the concept of customer participation (CP) is elaborated to explain the influence of customers-employees interactional micro-processes on organizational change. Relying on this framework, we draw three research proposals that could be further used in organizational change models to refine the role of the customer in organizational changes dynamics. We deem that the model proposed reflects the current reality of companies that increasingly involve customers in their daily activities. Thus, it can help corporate players to have a better understanding of the driving forces in change processes. However, this paper is but a first attempt to explore the role of clients in organizational change. Accordingly, an empirical study would be necessary in order to validate our proposals. The results also indicate the need for further research on the role of other external stakeholders in the production of organizational change.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational change – substantially transforming an organization's practices and structures – has always been of interest to researchers in organizational theory and practitioners (Lewin, 1951; Miles and Snow, 1984; Orlikowski, 1996; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Pettigrew, 1985). However, even as organizational literature increasingly studies the nature and processes of organizational change, this field seems far from mature in understanding the dynamics of change (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) and the role of organizations' stakeholders in change processes. In particular, little research has examined the role of clients in organizational change dynamics, especially in contexts of service organizations whose prevalence is one of the most striking features of post-industrial society (Mills and Morris, 1986). This lack of research is all the more surprising that clients play a key role in the production activities of these organizations and are likely to affect the organization's internal processes. Furthermore, service organizations now face an altered economic, technological and political environment, in which flexibility, agility, customization, client's involvement in the co-production of business processes, and learning are crucial. This context involves at least an exchange of information between clients and service employees, a transaction, and a co-creation process of value, which may transpire into organization change processes and dynamics (Mills and Morris, 1986). Yet, although clients are indispensable to the production activities and the co-creation of value of service organizations (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), their role as direct, individual, local participants of organizational change processes, despite their importance, has not been studied as such so far. As a result, the evolutions of the environment and the prevalence of clients in organizational processes have not led to corresponding challenges in the fundamental assumptions embedded in classical literature on organizational change. Thus, more than ever, these changes in organization's environment require from us to have a deeper look at the micro-processes and organizational ramifications (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002), which might lead customers to play a key role in initiating, enabling or constraining organizational change. This topic thus demands greater exploration, particularly in light of limitations in prior research that have prevented a full understanding of the dynamics of organizational change. Two approaches of organizational change have been developed so far: The traditional, dominant approach of organizational

change, which considers change as a synoptic, episodic phenomenon orchestrated by specific change agents at the top of the organization, seems poorly suited to the analysis of the dynamics of organizational change involving local micro-processes to which clients could potentially participate. The second approach, which considers organizational change as an emergent and ongoing process that is inherent in human action, suggests that small adjustments at the local level can create cumulative and substantial change through the interconnectedness of various micro-processes and local interactions (Mintzberg, 1979, 1987; Orlikowski, 1996; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). According to this second approach, organizational change does not only appear at the macro level, but also at the micro-level, so that such micro-processes also provide the means for transformational change and institutionalization of the latter.

However, although it emphasizes the complexity of organization change processes, this approach still privileges a vision of organizational change as an endogenous phenomenon, which prevents us from conceptualizing organizational change as an exogenous phenomenon, and from analyzing the role of external stakeholders such as customers in the dynamics of change. Thus we ask, how do customers influence organizational change dynamics through their interactions with contact employees in service settings? How do such interactional micro-processes among customers and contact employees influence organizational change dynamics in service settings? Our goal in this conceptual paper is to conceptualize, in line with the second approach of organizational change, the role of customers in the process of organizational change by shedding more light on the micro-processes, which, beyond the inner context of organizations, may involve customers in initiating, enabling and producing organizational change. Our intellectual task is to investigate what ramifications involving customers beyond the organizational context are, how and why they shape the character of change processes and dynamics (Pettigrew et al., 2001). To that end, we assume that, beyond past research that has considered them as "global active players" (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000), customers should also be viewed as individual social actors, whose actions, interactions, and interpersonal relations with service employees at the local level may affect organizational change dynamics. To address this goal, despite the absence of clients in most management theory (Bowen and Hallowell, 2002; Danet, 1981), we adopt a transdisciplinary perspective relying on the concept of customer participation (CP). CP, a concept that originates from the services marketing and management literature, studies the behavior of customers involved in the different steps (design, production, distribution) of the co-production of goods or services.

We provide in the next section an overview of background literature on organizational change, and put forward the need to develop our understanding of the role of client in change dynamics.

We then introduce he concept of CP and provide some hints as to how this concept may help to understand how customers may influence organizational change. Following this literature review, we offer an integrative framework that explains the role of clients in change dynamics by drawing specific proposals that could be further used in organizational change models. Finally, we discuss the key research and managerial implications, as well as avenues for future research.

2. A CRITICAL REVIEW OF TWO PERSPECTIVES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Organizational change has long interested researchers in social sciences and organizational theory (Orlikowski, 1996; Pettigrew et al., 2001). Indeed, a great deal of academic literature has investigated "the birth, development, transformation, decay and decline" of any organizational, human or natural system (Pettigrew et al., 2001, p.697). Change can be defined as the "reweawing of actors' webs of beliefs and habits of action as a result of new experiences obtained through interactions" (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, p.570). In reference to organizations, "change involves difference in how an organization functions, who its members and leaders are, what forms it takes, or how it allocates its resources" (Huber et al., 1993, p.216). Implicit in these quotes are the needs to identify who are the actors at stake in organizational change dynamics, but also the nature and content of their interactions that may lead to change. A range of approaches on organizational change have been developed over the past few decades (Pettigrew, 1985), and embody different assumptions about these actors, their contextualized interactions, and even change itself (Orlikowski, 1996): the "traditional perspective", and the "renewed perspective" of change. Yet, despite their divergences, both approaches share a common limitation, insofar as they do not really consider the role that the outer environment and context may have on organizational change.

2.1. THE TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF CHANGE

According to the traditional and most common view of change, organizational change can be grasped as a stage model in which the entity undergoing change evolves through distinct states at different points in time, as demonstrated by Lewin (1951) in his classic "unfreezing-moving-refreezing" model. In this approach, also called the "synoptic view" of organizational change, the latter is mostly associated to planned and intentional change (Weick and Quinn, 1999), produced by certain people in organizations: the change agents. This approach has developed a vision of change as "episodic", in that change tends to be infrequent, discontinuous and

deliberate (Pettigrew et al., 2001; Weick and Quinn, 1999). Such a view has given priority to stability and has treated change as an epiphenomenon (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). This traditional view has tended to consider that decisions to change are taken from the top of the organization, and that interpersonal dynamics can be safely disregarded (Taylor, 1993; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). In line with this view, most top managers have long assumed that "change is something that someone with authority does to someone who does not have authority" (Weick and Quinn, 1999, p.380). In this regard, because managers are presumed to be the primary source of organizational change (Orlikowski, 1996), organizations have long taken away people and practices that were considered as peripheral to organizational change (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Because it has given priority to stability and has considered change as an episodic phenomenon in the hands of some change agents, this traditional approach has not offered a complete understanding of the dynamics of organizational change, and in particular of its micro-processes, defined as "situated micro-level changes that actors enact over time as they make sense of and act in the world. (Orlikowski 1996, p.91). Yet, such micro-processes seem to play though a key role in the generation and dynamics of change (Stokes and Harris, 2012; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Weick and Quinn, 1999). Given its synoptic nature, this view hasn't done justice to the open-ended micro-processes that underlay the various origins and trajectories of organizational change. The problem with this traditional, synoptic approach of organizational change indeed is that it focuses on the changes that become institutionalized (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) and treat them as events to be managed separately from the ongoing process of organizing (Orlikowski, 1996). The risk with such a perspective is to miss out on all the "subterranean, microscopic changes that may never acquire the status of organizational systems and routines, but are not less important" in explaining organizational change dynamics (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, p. 580).

2.2. A RENEWED PERSPECTIVE ON CHANGE

In order to overcome the limitations of this first, traditional and dominating view, a much rarer, but much needed approach of research on organizational change has treated the latter as a continuous and non-episodic phenomenon (Orlikowski, 1996; Pettigrew, 1985; Weick and Quinn, 1999). This second approach has considered the need to stop giving priority to organization, and the necessity to cease considering change as an exceptional effect, initiated and produced only under specific circumstances by certain people (the change agents). This renewed vision has recognized that organizations can produce "continuous" change (as opposed to "episodic") by means of repeated acts of improvisation (Orlikowski, 1996) and learning

(Weick and Quinn, 1999), which translate into continuous modification of work practices and ways of relating that are ongoing, evolving and cumulative (Pettigrew et al., 2001). The exploration of such micro-processes is of considerable importance in understanding the dynamics of change (Pitsakis et al., 2012; Stokes and Harris, 2012; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002), as it enables to go beyond the traditional view of change as a linear process orchestrated from the top in response to perceived opportunities. Instead, it provides "a new pattern of organizing in the absence of explicit a priori intentions" (Orlikowski, 1996, p.65). Indeed, as Weick and Quinn (1999, p. 381) recognize, most organizations have "pockets of people somewhere" who can act as change agents through their initiatives, interactions and small adjustments to the environment.

A parallel can be established here with the literature on innovation processes and distinction between deliberate and emergent strategies (Mintzberg, 1979, 1987), which have already emphasized the role of individuals in change management and the production of strategies. In this regard, strategic innovations are not always the result of strategic decisions made by senior management, but also emerge as the result of autonomous initiatives at the local level where employees may act as "internal entrepreneurs" (Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983; Goshal and Bartlett, 1994; Jacobs and Heracleous, 2005; Noda and Bower, 1996). Local initiatives and decisions at the individual level can thus further affect the overall organizational strategy in an emergent and bottom-up logic. Organizational change may thus occur locally (Burgelman, 1983; Frohman, 1997; Kanter, 1983), as certain individuals reflect on circumstances and experiences and decide, more or less consciously, to intervene to adjust or change organizational practices and policies. In this perspective, the changes that actors implement following their reflection are anchored not only in their interactions with other actors (e.g. colleagues or managers), but also in their perceptions and interpretations of the behaviors of these other actors (Balogun, 2006).

Such local changes may then be amplified and institutionalized, depending on the "structural context", created by managers (Burgelman, 1983). These 'renewed change agents' can produce change through various combinations, so that small continuous adjustments, created across units, can cumulate and create substantial changes at the organizational level (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Their isolated innovations can travel and be then considered as relevant to a wider range of purposes at hand in the organization. Ongoing adjustments and improvisations thus appear as fundamental features of any organizational change (Orlikoswki, 1996), the latter being only realized in action instead of being anticipated or planned (Orlikoswki, 1996). In this view, organizational change can be conceptualized as an emerging (Mintzberg, 1979, 1987)

and "ongoing improvisation", "grounded in the ongoing practices of organizational actors, and emerging out of their (tacit and not so tacit) accommodations to and experiments with the everyday contingencies, breakdowns, exceptions, opportunities, and unintended consequences that they encounter" (Orlikowski, 1996, p. 65). Such micro-processes and improvisations open up possibilities for ongoing changes, some being anticipated, and some not (Orlikowski, 1996; Stokes and Harris, 2012; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). For example, past research inscribed in this second approach has identified how series of ongoing and opportunity-based changes emerge as new information systems are put in action (Orlikowski and Hofman, 1997).

Our paper draws on this second, renewed approach of organizational change. This perspective has the merit of underlining the complexity of organization change processes, by emphasizing that organizational change emerges through the diversity and interconnectedness of numerous interactions and micro-processes among a variety of actors (Ford and Ford, 1995; Stokes and Harris, 2012; Weick and Quinn, 1999). Yet, it suffers from two limitations, which the current paper intends to explore and overcome. First, this approach has not gone far enough in theoretically explaining the driving forces of improvisation, and accordingly the content and variety of micro-processes engaged in organizational change dynamics (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Second, it has essentially considered change from an internal perspective only, without taking into consideration whether or how external actors may influence organizational change – a limitation shared with the traditional perspective of organizational change. Table 1 provides a comparative view of traditional and renewed perspective of organizational change.

Table 1. A comparative view of traditional and renewed perspective of organizational change

	Traditional perspective	Renewed perspective
Type of change	Episodic	Continuous
Nature and characteristics	Synoptic, planned and intentional change Infrequent, discontinuous and deliberate	Ongoing, evolving and cumulative Realized in action, grounded in the ongoing practices of organizational actors
Actors' roles	Orchestration of change by change agents at the top of the organization (managers, executives)	Repeated acts of improvisation and learning by any organizational actor Emergence of change through the diversity and interconnectedness of many local micro-processes among a variety of actors
Limitations	Focuses on changes that become institutionalized open-ended Does not consider the micro-processes that underlay the various origins and trajectories of organizational change Focuses on an internal perspective of change, without taking into consideration the potential influence of external actors	Lack of theoretical explanation of the driving forces of improvisation (in particular regarding the content and variety of micro-processes) Focuses on an internal perspective of change, without taking into consideration the potential influence of external actors

2.3. THE NEGLECTED INFLUENCE OF THE OUTER CONTEXT ON ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE.

Whether in the traditional or renewed perspective, organizational change has been mostly studied in academic research from an "internal" standpoint. Indeed, past research has tended to see change as an endogenous phenomenon, affected by the organization's inner context – generally defined as the internal characteristics of "the structural, cultural and political environments through which ideas and actions for change proceed" (Pettigrew et al., 2001, p. 698). Yet, as demonstrated by more recent research, change is not only endogenously but also exogenously generated (Buchanan and Bryman, 2007). As recognized by Tsoukas and Chia (2002, p.577), "change is immanent in organizations: in carrying out their tasks, actors are compelled to interact with the outside world, and thus to accommodate new experiences and actors, having the inherent ability to be reflexive, are prone to drawing new distinctions and

making fresh metaphorical connections". The exogenous, outer context, defined in past research as including "the economic, social, political and sector environment" in which an organization is located (Pettigrew et al., 2001, p.698), is therefore of particular importance in organizational change dynamics. For example, changes in the environment may put pressure on management to improve the customer service (Orlikowski and Hofman, 1997).

However, past research has offered a limited view of the outer context involved in organizational change dynamics (Buchanan and Bryman, 2007; Pettigrew et al., 2001). Such context has been mostly seen as involving "the links between firm-level behaviors, the changing boundaries and composition of sectors, or the punishing effects of altering macroeconomic conditions within and between nation states" (Pettigrew et al., 2001, p. 698). The outer context has thus been almost exclusively viewed as a broad stimulus environment; beyond such broad macro trends, past academic research has not taken into consideration the role, at the micro level, played by external stakeholders in the organizational change process. Yet, organizations appear as sites of continuously evolving human action, where context can be considered as a "nested arrangement" of interrelationships between a variety of actors, structures and processes, in which the "subjective interpretations of actors' perceiving, learning and remembering help shape process" (Pettigrew et al., 2001, p.699), thus requiring the exploration of multiple and different levels of analysis, beyond the organization's boundaries.

In other words, to have a better understanding of organizational change dynamics notably means (a) revising the nature of the actors who may be at stake in these dynamics, including external actors, and (b) understanding the interactional micro-processes that take place between these actors. To that extent, a key participant in organizational processes has been largely forgotten in past academic research on organizational change: the customer.

3. CONSIDERING CUSTOMERS AS ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE PROCESSES

Companies have increasingly involved their customers in their processes (Merlo et al., 2014; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004), turning them into partial organizational members (Mills & Morris, 1986). This has given birth to the concept of customer participation (CP), which is related to the actions and resources supplied by customers when they are involved in firms' processes. Given that in many cases, CP implies interactions between customers and firms' employees, we suggest here that those customer interactions with insiders may trigger organizational change.

3.1. THE CUSTOMER, AN OVERLOOKED ACTOR IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL LITERATURE

More than thirty years ago, Danet (1981, p.382) stated that "organization theorists have viewed organizations from the top looking down or from the inside looking around [and thus] have hardly mentioned clients at all". Bowen and Hallowell reiterated the same comment in 2002, emphasizing that only services marketing theorists had really taken the customer into account, while organizational theorists had remained relatively silent about his potential impact on the organization. They also insisted on the necessity to have transdisciplinary research to tackle this topic, so as to reflect the cross-functional aspects and consequences of having customers participating in firms' processes. Unfortunately, the situation has not evolved that much since these scholars underlined this gap: the role of customers has rarely been mentioned in more recent academic organizational literature. In fact, echoing what Peters and Waterman wrote in 1982 ("No existing management theory helps much in explaining the role of the customer in the prototypical excellent company", p.156-157), it seems like past research has not offered an appropriate conceptualization of the role of customers in organizational change processes and dynamics. This is all the more surprising as early organizational scholars have highlighted the role that customers may play in the structuring and functioning of organizations (Barnard, 1948; Lefton and Rosengren, 1966; Parsons, 1956) – but in-depth research on this topic has remained scarce in organizational studies.

Yet, such research is undoubtedly needed. Firms have started relying on their customers at least since the 1930s, with supermarkets described as "models of customer co-production with customers selecting, carting, and transporting groceries" (Bendapudi and Leone, 2003, p.14). Nowadays, customers appear to be literally unavoidable, and have become essential participants in diverse co-creation processes (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008), to such an extent that it seems logical to consider that they may influence organizational change dynamics. Indeed, in line with the renewed approach of organizational change, customers can be regarded as individuals, whose local actions and ongoing cumulative interpersonal interactions with firms' employees may have an influence on organizational processes (Danet, 1981; Lefton and Rosengren, 1966; Plé, 2013), in particular on organizational change dynamics. Past research on the relationships between customers and service employees has for example demonstrated the importance of customers' role, as they shape the transactional environment of these service employees (Rafaeli, 1989). Furthermore, this customer influence can be considered as "instantaneous, continuous and simultaneous" with the job performance of service employees (Rafaeli, 1989, p.266), because it occurs and emerges through the interactions that customers have with contact employees.

The importance of customers as active participants in organizational processes and as "partial employees" (Mills & Morris, 1986) reinforces the notion that there is room to study their role in the initiation of organizational change processes. As a result, when it comes to organizational change dynamics, this implies that clients could provide the stimulus and initiatives for the emergence of a stream of events and actions, several of which are unanticipated, over time (Orlikowki, 1996). As past organizational research has shown that organizational change or disruptive innovations are not always the result of strategic decisions orchestrated at the top, but also emerge from local initiatives (Burgelman, 1983; Jacobs and Heracleous, 2005), similarly organizational change could be largely initiated, promoted, and developed by customers, considered as partial active and participating organizational members. In order to deepen our understanding of these dynamics, it seems thus essential for organizational theorists to investigate the micro-processes which, beyond the inner context of organizations, may involve customers in initiating and enabling organizational change. To that end, this paper suggests to rely on the concept of customer participation.

3.2. Customer participation and its influence on organizational change processes

Customer participation (CP) is a concept that originates from the services marketing literature, where it has been largely discussed (see Plé et al., 2010, for a review of the literature). The different definitions of CP reveal that it is "a behavioral concept that refers to the actions and resources supplied by customers" (Rodie and Kleine, 2000, p.111) that are liable to impact and potentially modify as diverse firms' organizational processes as service innovation, production, distribution or delivery. To that extent, works on CP can be put into perspective with the two approaches to organizational change.

In the abundant literature on customer participation, most research study the general and broad impact of CP on a process or on the entire organization. For instance, Ho and Ganesan (2013) show that CP can mediate the level of supplier knowledge sharing in competition games where competing suppliers need to collaborate to serve the same customer. Plé et al. (2010) describe how CP can shape and provoke the evolution of companies' business models. Other works explain how CP can alter the quality of a service production process and outcome, which can end up in changes to improve both of them (Bolton and Saxena-Iyer, 2009; Grönroos and Ojasalo, 2004). Also, much research has investigated how CP can influence new product development and innovation processes (Fang, 2008; Fang et al., 2008; Greer and Lei, 2012). Yet, these works usually do not investigate local interplays between customers and employees,

but instead stay focused on a macro-level analysis of the organization. Therefore, they are not interested in the ongoing process of organizational change, and thus do not explain how change may arise from the interactional micro-processes that occur between participating customers and employees. In other words, they are rather related to the traditional approach of organizational change rather than to the renewed approach that this paper draws on. To that extent, most of these studies "neglect the social aspect of the [customer-employee] interaction in favor of studying the functional impact of the customer's presence in the organization" (Czepiel, 1990, p.17).

At the opposite, in-depth studies of the interactions between participating customers and employees remain rather scarce. In general, they examine the influence of CP on the employees working conditions, job stress or satisfaction at work (Chan et al., 2010; Hsieh and Yen, 2005; Hsieh et al., 2004; Wetzels et al., 1999; Yi et al., 2011), but they are rarely related to the potential organizational changes that may result from such interactions. In fact, these works only allude either implicitly or quickly to the consecutive adaptations that these interactions may cause (whether at the organizational or employee level), and consider change as a deriving outcome of CP. For example, in their extensive review of CP, Mustak et al. (2013) do not refer to any work whose main focus would be the study of how CP may influence organizational change. Yet, such research seems theoretically and empirically sound and justified given the increasing significant role that customers play in organizational activities, both in breadth – i.e. the scope of CP that may affect one or more activities – and depth – i.e. the intensity of CP, some customers having a relatively low level of CP compared to others (Fang et al., 2008). Yet, some of them provide interesting insights into participating customers' influence on change through their interactions with contact employees.

In the end, most studies on customer participation remain at a rather global level (i.e. general influence of CP at a macro level) but except a few exceptions, they do not go in depth to study the influence of customers-employees interactions on organizational change dynamics. Accordingly, such interactions remain some kind of a black box, which we wish to open by building a conceptual framework of the customer's influence on micro-processes of organizational change.

4. TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE CUSTOMER'S INFLUENCE ON MICRO-PROCESSES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

In order to develop a better understanding of the influence of customers-employees interactional micro-processes on organizational change, we suggest developing a conceptual framework relying on the conceptual basis of customer participation. To do so, we first analyze the intensity and nature of customers' actions and resources, generally referred to as the inputs of customer participation in the academic literature. We then explain the role played by the antecedents of customer participation, which further determine its level. Finally, we suggest that the employees' perception of these inputs and antecedents can help to understand how customer-employees interactional micro-processes may generate organizational change. This is expressed through 3 research proposals.

4.1. INPUTS OF CP

The inputs of CP correspond to what customers bring when they are involved in organizational processes. Seven kinds of inputs have been identified (Plé, 2013): informational, physical, financial, emotional, temporal, behavioral and relational inputs (Table 2).

First, informational inputs (Etgar, 2008; Fang, 2008; Mills et al., 1983; Mills and Morris, 1986) incorporate both the information that customers give to companies (e.g. information about themselves or about a product when they want it to be fixed) and mental efforts that customers make to get the service (e.g. to understand their role in the process). Then, physical inputs are the "customer's own tangible and physical efforts" (Rodie and Kleine, 2000, p.112). Physical inputs encompass goods that customers bring in the process for companies to act on them, such as a car to be repaired (Lovelock, 1983; Siehl et al., 1992). Third, financial inputs are the amount of money paid by the customer to get a service (Bitner et al., 1997). Fourth emotional inputs refer to the emotions that customers may feel when participating (Rodie and Kleine, 2000). Temporal inputs refer to the time spent by the customer to participate, including the time spent to understand how the process works and how customers fit in the process (Etgar, 2008). Behavioral inputs depict how customers behave when interacting personally with service employees (Kelley et al., 1990; Plé et al., 2010). Finally, relational inputs are "the customers' state of mind resulting from past service encounters when entering a new encounter in a similar context" (Plé, 2013, p.7).

Table 2. Synthesis of CP's inputs

Inputs of CP	Definition
Informational inputs	Information given by the customer to companies and necessary mental efforts to get the service
Physical inputs	Customers' own tangible and physical efforts
Financial inputs	Amount of money paid to get a service
Emotional inputs	Emotions that customers may feel when participating
Temporal input	Time spent by customers to participate (from understanding how the process works and how customers fit in it)
Behavioral input	Customers' behavior while interacting personally with service employees
Relational input	Customers' state of mind resulting from past service encounters when entering a new encounter in a similar context

All these inputs vary in terms of nature and quantity, depending for example on the nature of the process, on customers' traits or on situational factors (Etgar, 2008). They also evolve as customers are exposed to the same or similar service experience. As an example, a customer who has already used a smartphone may need to mobilize less mental efforts to understand how a tablet works (especially if both run the same operating system). So, not all seven kinds of inputs have to be mobilized, and not at the same level, by participating customers. Eventually, these inputs are also non-exclusive, i.e. a customer may mobilize more than one input when participating.

4.2. ANTECEDENTS OF CP

Just as the inputs necessary to the service process may vary, not all customers have the same level of participation. For this reason, understanding the antecedents, or "facilitating factors" of CP (Auh et al., 2007, p.360), is crucial as they explain what leads the customer to participate or not to participate. These antecedents can be either customer-related or firm-related (Table 3). There are five customer-related antecedents of CP: role size, role awareness, role clarity, customer ability and customer willingness. First, role size refers to the proportion of service produced and delivered by the customer (Bowen, 1986; Rodie and Kleine, 2000). Second, role awareness means that customers need to be aware of the role they have to fulfill to get a service (Goodwin, 1988; Lovelock, 2001). Third, this role has to be clear in the customers' head, or CP may be sub-optimal from the firm's perspective (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2000; Meuter et al., 2005). Fourth, customer ability indicates that the customer must be capable to participate (i.e. needs to have the appropriate knowledge, competency, time to participate) (Chervonnaya, 2003; Meuter et al., 2005), but also needs to be convinced of having this ability (Auh et al., 2007;

McKee et al., 2006). Last but not least, customer willingness to participate is indispensable too (Bowen, 1986; Rodie and Kleine, 2000), which means that the customer must be ready to do what the firm expects to be done to get the service.

On the other hand, firm-related antecedents include the manners that firms can help their customers to participate, also grouped under the umbrella "customer organizational socialization" (Kelley et al., 1990). To improve their participation, customers must often acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions to perform as effective partial employees (Mills and Morris, 1986). To that end, firms can either help them to adapt by a better understanding of the firm's norms, values and expectations, or by developing customers knowledge and required skills to participate (Claycomb et al., 2001; Wu, 2011). This can be done in many ways. For instance, by resorting to corporate literature (e.g. brochures, websites Frequently Asked Questions…). Also, by emphasizing the advantages of CP through discounts, faster deliveries, etc. (Bateson, 1985). Finally, firms can mobilize employees (Bove et al., 2009), or rely on customers' online communities (Algesheimer et al., 2010) to encourage customers to participate or guide their participation.

Table 3. Synthesis of CP's antecedents

Antecedents of CP	
Customer-related antecedents of CP	**Firm-related antecedents**
Role size: proportion of service produced and delivered by customer	"Customer organizational socialization" (Kelley et al, 1990):
Role awareness: customers' awareness of the role they have to fulfill to get a service	• Better understanding of the firm's norms, values and expectations
Role clarity: unambiguity of customers' role in their mind	• Development of customers knowledge and required skills to participate
Customer ability: ability to participate (appropriate knowledge, competency, time) and conviction of having such ability	
Customer willingness: readiness to do what the firm expects to be done to get the service	

4.3. PERCEPTIONS OF CP INPUTS AND ANTECEDENTS BY CONTACT EMPLOYEES

The few works that explicitly focus on customers-employees interactions provide interesting insights into participating customers' influence on change through their interactions with contact employees.

For instance, Rafaeli (1989) demonstrates that cashiers (i.e. contact employees) tend to modify the way they coordinate with their colleagues because of five characteristics of their interactions with customers. These are (a) the amount of time customers and cashiers spend together, (b)

the amount of feedback customers provide to cashiers, (c) the amount of information customers provide to cashiers, (d) customer-cashier physical proximity and (e) the crucial role that cashiers attribute to customers. To stick to CP terminology, this means that the capacity and willingness of customers (antecedents of CP) to spend time with cashiers (that is, provide temporal inputs to contact employees) and to provide cashiers with information and feedback (that is, bring informational inputs in their interactions with contact employees) modifies the way that the latter act with their colleagues. In addition to this direct influence, Rafaeli also shows that customers direct interactions with these contact employee's co-workers and managers impact the way that contact employees would behave with other cashiers or customers. In other words, customers direct interactions with the cashiers' co-workers and managers (that is to say, people involved in the local web of social exchanges that cashiers have at work) indirectly modify the way that cashiers behave.

In the same vein, Plé (2013) shows how customers influence the quality of the coordination process among remote colleagues who work in different retail banking channels. Among the various components of the coordination process, also called relational coordination (Gittell), are the accuracy of information and mutual respect between colleagues. In his study, Plé demonstrates that customers may detrimentally impact the quality of information accuracy transfers among colleagues by communicating deliberately or unconsciously different information to the diverse employees that they are in contact with. In CP terms, this means that customers do not provide the necessary quality informational input, either because they are not willing to participate, or cannot participate. Since these contact employees interact with each other too to deliver a service to customers, this results in misunderstandings, loss of time and local adjustments from employees to compensate for this informational discrepancy. Accordingly, this gives employees a bad image of their colleagues, which negatively influences the level of mutual respect among colleagues.

Both cited works there share the assumption that the employees' behavioral adjustments are caused by the perception that employees have of CP inputs and antecedents, confirming the critical role of perceptions in customer-employees interactions (Cook et al., 2002; Czepiel, 1990). This is aligned with the renewed perspective of organizational change, which also acknowledges the crucial importance of these perceptions and of the subjective interpretations of actors involved in interactions (Pettigrew et al., 2001). Indeed, in her study, Rafaeli (1989) explains how the interactional microprocesses between customers and employees tend to modify the employee's local working behaviors, through the way that CP inputs and antecedents are perceived by contact employees. On the other hand, Plé (2013) explicates how

the interactional microprocesses among customers and employees tend to have detrimental effects on the quality of the coordination process between employees, because of the perception employees have of CP inputs and antecedents. This results in local behavioral changes by employees in the way that they work with their colleagues. The two propositions below reflect these insights.

> *Proposition 1: The perception that contact employees who are engaged in interactional micro-processes with customers have of CP inputs may generate local (i.e. at the employee's level) changes and adaptations.*

> *Proposition 2: The perception that contact employees who are engaged in interactional micro-processes with customers have of CP antecedents may generate local (i.e. at the employee's level) changes and adaptations.*

Furthermore, in line with the renewed approach of organizational change, the accumulation of local, individual changes due to the influence of CP seems eventually translated into more global organizational adaptations and changes. In her 1989 paper, Rafaeli refers to global, organizational changes such as job or routines redesign. These come from the aggregation of individual and local working behavioral changes that are further passed on the entire organization. For instance, some of these new behaviors are transposed to other employees as new ways to deal with customers. All the same, Plé (2013) explains that to limit the negative influence on the coordination process among banking channels that results from the way that employees perceive CP, banks have to proceed to organizational adjustments (e.g. procedural changes, adaptations of the communication and coordination modes, etc.). These are to make sure that employees who work in one channel know and understand the work that their remote colleagues do, but also understand that this informational discrepancy is due to customers. In other words, the accumulation of local, individual changes due to the influence of CP is eventually translated into more global organizational adaptations and changes, which is aligned with the renewed approach of organizational change. From these developments, we formulate the third proposition below:

> *Proposition 3: The accumulation of local changes and adaptations provoked by the perception that contact employees who are engaged in interactional micro-processes with customers have of (a) CP inputs or (b) CP antecedents may engender bottom-up global organizational change.*

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Considering that customers play an ever-growing role in firms' daily activities (Merlo et al., 2014; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004), this paper suggests that this comes with crucial organizational consequences that existing academic literature has neglected, especially concerning organizational change dynamics. The current piece of work attempts to start bridging this gap between practice and theory by relying on a transdisciplinary approach that links the organizational change literature, and services marketing and management literature. We believe that this transdisciplinary perspective brings interesting theoretical and managerial implications, as well as avenues for future research.

5.1. IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

Given the rising integration of customers in firms' processes and the consecutive development of customer-employees interactional micro-processes, we deem that combining the two literatures offers a more fine-grained and more realistic representation of organizational change. In addition, it contributes to both literatures considered independently of each other.

On the one hand, organizational change literature has adopted a renewed perspective which allows considering change not only as a top-down, but also as a bottom-up process relying on cumulated local and individual changes and adaptations that further pass on the whole organization (Burgelman, 1983; Pettigrew et al., 2001). Even though it has the merit of underlining the complexity of organization change processes, by emphasizing that organizational change emerges through the diversity and interconnectedness of many interactional micro-processes (Ford and Ford, 1995; Weick and Quinn, 1999), this literature does not include customers as individual actors who could participate in change dynamics. In so doing, this paper answers the call of Tsoukas and Chia (2002), insofar as the emergence of bottom-up change due to the interactional processes among participating customers and contact employees represents a previously unimagined ramification. As such, this paper goes beyond a macro-perspective of the influence of the outer environment at large on organizational change dynamics (Pettigrew et al., 2001). Instead, it provides a micro analysis of customers' influence though their interactions with firm's employees.

On the other hand, CP academic literature usually adopts a functionalist perspective that puts the emphasis on how what participating customers bring to service quality, service satisfaction, or new product design processes (e.g. Fang et al., 2008; Kelley et al., 1990; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2000). But their social interactions with employees are more rarely examined, as it is illustrated in the analysis of CP literature provided by Mustak et al. (2013), and their sequels

on organizational change are but implicit. This paper contributes to this literature by suggesting that customers' inputs and antecedents to participate may deliberately or involuntarily drive local changes because of the way that they are perceived by contact employees in their interactions. This contributes to a developing perspective that customers should be considered as actual co-creators of the organization (Plé, 2013), and that "customer participation [...] should evolve into something that is more embedded in the strategic fabric of the organization" (Merlo et al., 2014, p 86).

5.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGERS

Our conceptual framework has deepened our understanding of organizational change and its underlying dynamics by highlighting customer's role in initiating change. This study is of managerial interest for various categories of corporate players. Practitioners need to understand what lies behind dynamics of organizational change. This paper helps them in doing so, since the initiation of local changes through micro-processes involving customers and contact employees generates broader organizational changes answering customers' needs. This paper also provides managers with a richer view of organizational change, as it shows the importance of a better understanding of customers' expectations, which not only influence organizational products and services, but also the kind of organization and thus the kinds of changes to make in an organization. Eventually, this paper offers some insight into how to facilitate the integration of customers in further organizational processes.

5.3. LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This paper is a first step towards, we hope, a fine-grained analysis and conceptualization of the influence of the customer on organizational change dynamics. As such, it does not come without limitations, and raises many questions to be explored in future research. First, it is a conceptual paper; thus, both qualitative and quantitative empirical research would enable exploring and testing our three propositions. Our paper also indicates the need for further research to develop greater insight into the nature of the interaction between customers and employees, which could increase or decrease the capacity of customers to provoke change. Furthermore, propositions 1 and 2 raise the question of the relative weights of inputs and antecedents in employees' perceptions. For instance, do employees give more attention to antecedents, such as the willingness of customers to participate, or to customers' inputs provided in a process (e.g. information). All the same, are do some inputs or antecedents of CP influence more the employees' perception of CP? Underlying is the question of whether some inputs or antecedents

are more liable to generate organizational change than others. Additional research could also focus on other customer's or employee's characteristics that could affect micro-processes of organizational change. This paper also raises the question of organizational culture, since employees could be more prone to pass on the changes (explicitly or implicitly) that result from customer-employees interactions if there is a culture to accept bottom-up changes in the organization.

Despite such limitations, our theoretical developments provide a basis for further research, which could extend the classic view of organizational change, while gaining a deeper understanding of the role of customers in organizational processes.

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