NEW MANAGERIAL PRACTICES IN POST-BUREAUCRATIC ORGANIZATION: INVESTIGATING EMPLOYEES' SUBJECTIVE RESPONSES AT AIRBUS

ST-AIMS 9 - Innovations managériales et Grand Challenges : quelles perspectives de recherche autour des innovations managériales responsables/ durables ?

ABSTRACT

The shift toward "post-bureaucratic" management, initially heralded for its promise of greater flexibility and employee empowerment, often leads to a hybridization of traditional and modern approaches, creating managerial complexity. Existing literature tends to dichotomize the consequences of this complexity—viewing it as either enabling innovation or inducing paralysis—overlooking the agency of individual actors.

This paper addresses this gap by exploring how do employees engage with and potentially enact post-bureaucratic managerial practices within constrained organizational environments?

The findings rely on an in-depth case study at Airbus, where two managerial logics— empowerment and industrial rationalization—were introduced in response to increased production demands.

This study contributes to post-bureaucratic management literature by illustrating both enabling and constraining effects of managerial complexity. It also enriches the institutional logics framework by showing that different variants of the same logic can coexist, providing a more dynamic understanding of managerial complexity.

Keywords: post-bureaucratic organizations, managerial complexity, institutional logics, employee empowerment, organizational rationalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 1990s, an extensive literature has presaged the dissolution of the bureaucratic 'iron cage' (Weber, 1964), considered as ineffective and inappropriate for the challenges of the late 20th century (Castells, 2010; Reed, 2005). In response to contemporary demands for flexibility and adaptability, a so-called "post-bureaucratic" model has emerged, promising greater organizational responsiveness, transversality, and employee empowerment (Heckscher & Donnellon, 1994). However, far from the radical shift expected, post-bureaucratic management is rather characterized by an hybridization between 'old' and 'new' managerial practices belonging to different rationalities (Sturdy, Wright, & Wylie, 2016).

While this hybridization is often perceived as a strategic choice, it can also emerge from the actions of individual actors within the organization who challenge existing constraints. In rigid organizational contexts driven by short-term economic goals, managerial innovation may not necessarily result from top-down strategies. Instead, it may stem from the clandestine efforts of individuals or small groups of actors driven by strong convictions, resistance, or even a capacity for protest (Joffre & Loilier, 2012). This raises critical questions about the extent to which such innovation is initiated independently of formal strategic directives, as well as the conditions under which isolated actors might adopt managerial innovations without explicit approval or support from top-management.

To address this gap, we ask the following research question: How do employees engage with and potentially enact post-bureaucratic managerial practices within constrained organizational environments?

Our empirical analysis focuses on an in-depth case study of an Airbus production line. Following a significant increase in production speed since 2015, two competing managerial logics were introduced, creating managerial complexity by simultaneously emphasizing industrial rationalization and frontline employee empowerment. Drawing on 200 hours of observations and 56 semi-structured interviews, this study uncovers various situated interactions between these

managerial logics (Furnari, 2019). The findings reveal that frontline employees navigate these logics in diverse ways. At times, they perceive managerial complexity as an enabler, fostering autonomy and innovation. At other times, they experience it as a constraint, marked by tensions and contradictions. These observations suggest that the coexistence of managerial logics is not merely a matter of compatibility or incompatibility but also depends on the subjective and situated strategies of the individuals who experience them.

By exploring the notion of "post-bureaucratic managerial complexity" this study firstly contributes to a better understanding of post-bureaucratic management (Bardon & Borzillo, 2016; Bardon & Josserand, 2018; Josserand, Teo, & Clegg, 2006), illustrating both enabling and constraining combinations of managerial logics. Secondly, the analysis enriches the institutional logics literature by demonstrating that different legitimations, or "variants", of the same logic may exist. I also suggest that the compatibility of the variants of the same logic can vary, which in turn affects the perception of their coexistence, and allows for a more dynamic understanding of managerial complexity (Currie & Spyridonidis, 2016).

This paper is structured as follows. Initially, it reviews the literature on institutional logics and the challenges that arise from their simultaneous existence. By doing so, it reveals a blind spot in the comprehension of logics compatibility and proposes a more subjective and situated approach as a mean to shed new light on this phenomenon. Thereafter, the empirical context of the study and the research design implemented are outlined. Subsequently, the findings are presented, followed by the implications for academia and management.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW. SUBJECTIVE ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL COMPLEXITY

In their attempt to "bring society back in", Friedland and Alford (1991, p. 241) introduced the notion of 'institutional logics' to explain how individuals and organizations behaviors were influenced by their societal environment. Institutional logics are defined as "a set of material practices and symbolic constructions" (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 248) that constitutes a

coherent vision of the "rules of action, interaction and interpretation" (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804).

While early research on institutional logics focused on the dominance of one logic and its replacement by a rival logic (Suddaby, Cooper, & Greenwood, 2007; Thornton, 2004), subsequent studies were quick to notice that many organizations are characterized by the enduring coexistence of multiple logics, what Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta and Lounsbury (2011) called 'institutional complexity'.

This phenomenon well describe the ambivalent nature of post-bureaucratic management which characterized by the duality of 'managerial logics' that favor both control and autonomy (Bardon & Josserand, 2018). Indeed, as Josserand and al (2006, p.54) argue: "post-bureaucratic era is characterized by hybridity. […] [it] interpolates the Weberian ideal type with democratic principles". The coexistence of the 'old' bureaucratic type and the 'new' post-bureaucratic organizational paradigm gives rise to a combination of both modes of functioning (Spicer, 2011; Sturdy et al., 2016) which enable us to affirm that post-bureaucratic management, such as the one we will present in our empirical study, provides an original illustration of 'managerial complexity'.

Existing literature has so far identified ambivalent consequences of institutional complexity. On the one hand, the extant literature have underlined its negative effects, such as identity conflicts and power struggles between different groups (Fiol, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009; Zilber, 2002); and the potential for internal competition to weaken organizational coherence (Ashforth & Reingen, 2014; Green, Babb, & Alpaslan, 2008). On the other hand, various studies have pointed the potential benefits of institutional complexity (Allard-Poesi, 2015; Smith & Besharov, 2019; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012), such as the development of innovation capacity (Dalpiaz, Rindova, & Ravasi, 2016; Jay, 2013; Tracey, Phillips, & Jarvis, 2011), or providing actors with resources to formulate alternative courses of action (Gümüsay, Smets, & Morris, 2020; Pache & Santos, 2013a).

The variety of institutional complexity consequences can be attributed to the nature of the relationship between the logics involved. For instance, according to Besharov and Smith (2013), institutional complexity can be analyzed using a grid based on two dimensions: the significance of these logics within the organization, including their impact on essential organizational functions, and the level of compatibility between these different rationalities. The latter can be influenced by two main factors as outlined in the literature. Firstly, the permeability of these logics determined by their capacity to integrate common elements with other logics, which could be enhanced by their degree of ambiguity (Kent & Dacin, 2013). Secondly, the scope of this complexity which refers to the contradictions between the logics involved; those that differ in terms of their purpose are generally more difficult to reconcile than those that differ in terms of the means to achieve this end (Purdy & Gray, 2009; Westphal & Zajac, 2001).

By considering logics as analytical tools, these works present a static perspective that leads either to a complementary or contradictory coexistence, without considering the role of actors' agency. Moreover, these studies suggest that logics are unified and stable rationalities, which have since been called into question (Quattrone, 2015). This viewpoint indeed overlooks the various components that make up a logic (Thornton et al., 2012), and fails to recognize their inherent diversity when they are situated in specific contexts (Lounsbury, Steele, Wang, & Toubiana, 2021). To improve our understanding of institutional complexity, it is necessary to shift our focus and recognize that logics are not static but continuously negotiated and interpreted by individuals that make them live (Bévort & Suddaby, 2016; Martin, Currie, Weaver, Finn, & McDonald, 2017; Zucker & Schilke, 2019). This observation echoes Pache & Santos (2013b) results which explain how social enterprises "selectively coupled intact elements prescribed by each logic" to deal with institutional complexity. This suggests that elements from one logic may be partially compatible with elements from another logic. Currie and Spyridonidis (2016, p.77) similarly argue that "any logic is variegated and ambiguous", and that actors continuously interpret and enact them in order to achieve their goals. Everitt (2013) also provides an example of how teacher candidates'

sensemaking of certain institutional logics can challenge and legitimize educational institutions. Demers and Gond (2020) extend this perspective by examining the reactions to institutional complexity with regard to sustainability within organizations. Their research demonstrates the various justifications and compromises that individuals make to legitimize their actions when confronted with conflicting principles. In line with this stream of research, this study focuses on situated social interactions to analyze how front-line employees make sense of post-bureaucratic managerial complexity (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006; Martin et al., 2017). This approach allows for an in-depth examination of the ways in which employees navigate and interpret the complexity inherent to post-bureaucratic management.

3. METHOD

3.1. Empirical case study: illustration of the post-bureaucratic managerial complexity

This research draws on an in-depth case study of an Airbus production line chosen for its strategic importance. In 2019, only five years after its launch, it represented more than 10% of total deliveries of commercial aircrafts. Until the Covid19 pandemic, the production rate never stopped growing, rising from 14 products manufactured in 2015 to 93 in 2018. This rapid development led to an increase in work intensity and caused several musculoskeletal disorders and sick leave.

To keep improving production capacity, managers had to apply the Company Excellence System (CES), mainly based on Lean Management which underlines the benefits of standardized production methods to foster quality and efficiency (Lowe & Oliver, 1997; Reichhart & Holweg, 2007; Womack & Jones, 1996). The CES implementation is regularly subject to internal audits that evaluate the production lines industrial maturity, which is then included in a company ranking visible from every organizational member.

At the same time, managers had to address health and well-being issues of their team to regain a high level of commitment. They thus implemented several initiatives aimed at empowering their front-line employees (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kirkman et al., 2004), based on the idea that

'liberating' people from a rigid structure and decentralizing power should improve employee well-being, creativity and productivity (Arnaud, Mills, & Legrand, 2016; Carney & Getz, 2016; Lee & Edmondson, 2017). For example, they propose to front-line employees to take new managerial responsibilities such as line planning, launching continuous improvement projects, employees' training to enrich their daily work. These new tasks were volunteer-based and enabled employees to develop new skills and to feel more autonomous in their work organization. This case study thus presents some features of an 'ideal case' (Yin, 2009) to analyze post-bureaucratic managerial complexity showing the simultaneously implementation of two different managerial logics that we will detailed bellow.

3.2. Data collection

In order to capture the subjective responses to new managerial practices implementation, I immersed myself in the field for 20 months, from October 2017 to May 2019.

The qualitative data presented in this paper was collected from three main sources. Firstly, I combined three dynamic observation methods proposed by Arnaud and Mills (2012) modifying the duration and the researcher position - nomadic or static -, in order to capture unpredictable events and behaviours. I attended all the meetings and daily routines planned by the CES agenda, I also shadowed six line-leaders and three front-line managers during their whole work time and finally conducted frequent random observations in the line offices and during institutional events. This ethnographic approach based on 200h of observation allowed me to engage with the subject and experience how their meaning making were elaborated *in situ* (Silverman, 2016, pp. 101–102).

Secondly, I conducted 56 semi-structured interviews averaging 70 minutes (see Appendix A), with two types of organizational members. On the one hand, I interviewed 25 members of the production line, covering the four levels of hierarchical line – front-line workers and leaders, managers, line managers and site managers - and all the support functions aiming to discover the line history and the challenges encountered since 2015. By doing so I could better understand the logics implementation motivations at the micro level. Next, I interviewed 21 workers dedicated

to managerial innovations implementation such as 'Lean experts', 'CES experts', 'Cultural Change experts', etc., to identify the various managerial logics that coexisted in the production line's close environment.

Finally, I complemented these primary data with internal and external information gathered on the company website, journal articles and trade publications. These helped to better identify the industrial and organizational issues while internal documents provided an overview of the institutional discourse.

3.3. Data analysis

We divided our data analysis into three main stages.

Firstly, relying on both observations, informal conversations and interviews, I conducted a chronological narrative (Cassell & Lee, 2016) to build a detailed event history database of the production line since its launch in 2015. This helped us to identify the various challenges faced by the line during its evolution. This analysis oriented my focus towards what was an issue for both the managerial team and front-line employees: the simultaneous implementation of two different managerial logics, with potentially conflicting views on how work should be achieved.

Secondly, with managerial logics as unit of analysis, we started identifying the 'set of material practices and symbolic' elements that actors' associate with each managerial logic, which led us to name them logic of rationalization and logic of empowerment.

Once the managerial logics were identified, we further our analysis to understand how employees interpret their underlying rationality and use it as resources in different contexts.

To do so, we firstly relied on a thematic coding analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), which revealed that two different interpretations were made of each managerial logic, that I propose to call "variants". In our case, a managerial logic variant is defined as the legitimation that explains how the managerial rationality enables to reach organizational efficiency.

As illustrated in the Table below, the empowerment logic is perceived as achieving organizational efficiency by fostering delegated decision-making and self-management; which

are its two variants. On the other hand, the rationalization logic is legitimated by its ability to provide a baseline management system which enables organizational uniformization leading to its efficiency.

Table 1. Empowerment logic variants coding process

Empowerment logic legitimation	Empowerment logic variants
"our global [firm] approach aims to involve more our employees, to give them the latitude to take decisions, because we have realized [...] that people's well-being at work also depends on their commitment." (Leadership Expert)	**Delegated decision making**
"We stop passing everything through the leader because he is only one, we overturn the pyramid to the maximum because once again if everything must go up and be decided up there, it is less powerful than if everyone decides and that the driver comes rather from the bottom of the pyramid and that what is at the top just serves to provide the direction." (Unit Manager 1)	
"there is no need to always ask managers what the best solution is. Front-line employees have experience, they often know what to do and it is quicker if we let them do what they know how to do"(Expert Empowerment 6)	
"the fact that today we are encouraging people to be more autonomous is also inevitably transforming the manager role. He becomes more a leader, he is not anymore saying what you have to do, it's more about 'how I coach my teams to make them more autonomous'" (Expert Airbus Leadership University 1)	
Thanks to the dynamics of empowerment, there is self- management that is great for [front-line workers]. It's very enriching to say, "We manage ourselves, we plan ourselves, we position ourselves on positions according to progress and we don't need a manager to tell us which position to take."" (Lean Expert)	**Self- Management**
"for me, an empowered team it's a team that is autonomous enough to be able to decide on its own, that is to say to self- organize and self-adjust according to its needs and objectives, and without asking itself the question of "my job is this". (Unit Manager 2)	

"for me, an empowered team it is a team that is autonomous enough to be able to decide on its own, that is to say to self-organize and self- adjust according to its needs and objectives, and without asking itself the question of "my job is this" (Unit manager 2)	

Table 2. Rationalization logic variants coding process

Rationalization logic legitimation	Rationalization logic variants
"CES is a bit like McDonald's standards that must be kept in order to always get the same burgers, well this [CES] is our standard" (Line Leader 1)	**Baseline Management System**
"CES is a kind of basic tools kit that you can rely on because they are used elsewhere in the company. It's a common language." (Lean Expert)	
"The [CES] describes all the routines you have in any kind of job, in any kind of activity. So it describes all the quality routines, meetings, etc. Basically it's like the matrix, everything is in the CES and the CES is everything." (HR Manager 2)	
"[the CES] is international so the components are the same for everyone, and there is an evaluation grid that is the same for everyone whether you are Spanish, English or German, the reference system is the same" (CES Expert 1)	
"The Company Excellence System is aimed to achieved more performance, it helps us to organize ourselves in order to optimize our way of working and to reduce the costs behind" (Unit Manager 2)	
"For many people, CES is irrelevant because it's a standard to be applied and it's difficult to be innovative when a standard is imposed for everyone." (Manager 1)	**Management Uniformization**
"The CES is necessary to compare with the same KPI the productivity of the different production sites, otherwise you compare apples to oranges" (CES Expert)	
"what we're also looking for with CES is a robust way of working, that doesn't rely on one person because when the person leaves for another unit, you have to be able to continue to produce without losing knowledge..." (Team Leader 1)	
"[the CES] is international so the components are the same for everyone, and there is an evaluation grid that is the same for everyone whether you are Spanish, English or German, the reference system is the same" (CES Expert 1)	

The last phase of data coding consisted in analyzing the interactions between the two managerial logics during various situated social interactions (Furnari, 2019). To do so, we firstly identify during our observations situations where the two logics were embodied or evoked and how front-line employees dealt with their coexistence. Surprisingly, we observed different reactions and ways to make sense of the studied post-bureaucratic complexity. Sometimes workers manage to create complementarity between the two managerial logics: *« when we started using the Company Excellence System, we really wanted to empower people by starting with the tools they had already implemented and focusing on what they need, not following the CES booklet. » (Manager 1)*; while in other occasions contradictions emerge: *« My prerogative as a manager is to make my team reach a certain level of industrial maturity with our processes and to pass the audits, which is a bit complicated in an environment where you make people empowered. » (Manager 2)*.

The finding section provides three interactions between managerial logics variants. I selected interactions observed *in vivo* and discussed, formally or informally, with the participant in to order to capture their interpretation. This triangulation enabled to understand the issues at stake.

4. RESULTS

As mentioned, the findings section presents the analysis of various interactions between the managerial logics' variants, i.e. delegated decision-making and self-management for the logic of empowerment, and baseline management system and uniformization for the logic of rationalization.

4.1. Perceived compatibility between the baseline system and delegated decision-making variants: planning panel colours

The rationalization logic is often perceived as a baseline management system, which splits work into precisely described activities. This division is sometimes seen as an incentive to delegate certain tasks more easily. In this perspective, the responsibility of the CES implementation has been shared among several members of the operational team: *"this year [2018] the management*

team has decided that I [line manager] will no longer be 100% responsible for the CES implementation, but that it is up to each person in the team to be responsible for a component, that is another example of delegation and empowerment" (Line Manager 1). While this delegation may simply seem to consist in applying standards, the employees perceive it as an opportunity to develop their empowerment by testing some improvements and adapting these standards to their specific needs: *"sure, it's a bit of extra work, but it breaks the routine and I learn something new and feel involved in the team's objectives" (worker 2, responsible of the employees' trainings).* For example, the employee in-charge of the continuous improvement of the line decided to work on the planning panel which is part of the CES standard toolkit and allows to evaluate at a glance the performance of the production line by comparing the real time situation with the set objectives. The tension between the two logics arose when workers asked CES auditors to adapt this tool with their local priorities: *"I have a question about the imposition of colours and so on... because it's so colourful that we don't even know what it means anymore. Normally it's about operations but we wanted to work by difficulty level instead of operation type to know if they're easy or difficult tasks [...] We wanted to know if we are free to change it… because that's the whole debate for the past year: we've been told that we're free and responsible but they [those who design the standards], are so narrow-minded..." (worker 3, responsible of the continuous improvement of the production line).* This proposition is indeed linked with one of the main issues the production line was facing: musculoskeletal disorders mainly due to a lack of task rotation between workers on risk-prone workstations. This situation contributed to several accidents and negatively affected the moral of the workers and their trust in the management team, considered responsible for this problem. This task rotation issue was thus an urgent problem to tackle but line-leaders, in charge of workers' assignment, had difficulties identifying which workstation was more physically demanding and to remember where their colleagues had been working on previous days. To enable them to target the most demanding operations, they proposed to create a simple colour code that could be applied to every operation: green would

mean easy, orange would signify medium physical demands and red would be an alert for a high level of physical demand. The nature of the managerial complexity seems here to be contradictory as this initiative reflects the empowerment logic which encourages people to enact their environment by adapting their tools to fit with their local context, however it did not correspond to the baseline colour-code imposed by the CES. However, the answer of the CES auditor enables to modify the interaction nature between the two logics: *"well, if it doesn't make any sense to you, change it. Standards are thought to help you"*. Answering this way, the CES auditor not only defuses the opposition and creates an interdependence between the two logics showing that standardization is not something that prevents empowerment, but a reference given to workers that they are free to adapt. This transformation of the nature of the institutional complexity allows the team to modify the color code and to pursue their effort by changing also the magnets representing each worker to better identify which workstation they were assigned to each day.

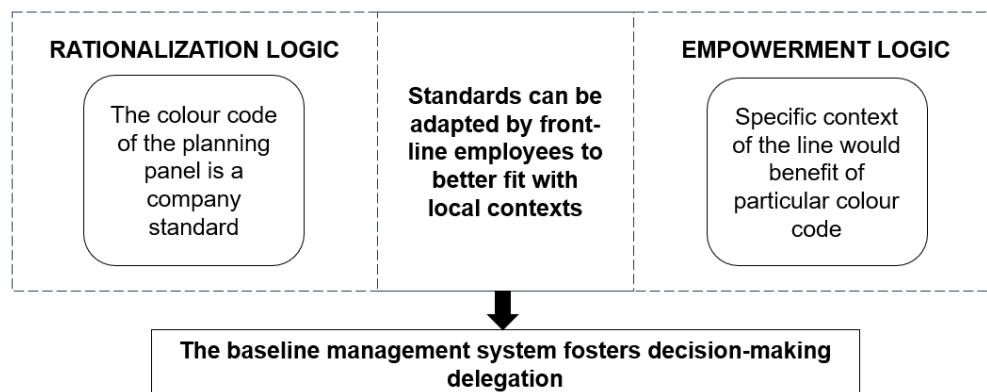**Figure 1. Perceived compatibility between logics' variants**

RATIONALIZATION LOGIC		EMPOWERMENT LOGIC
The colour code of the planning panel is a company standard	**Standards can be adapted by front-line employees to better fit with local contexts**	Specific context of the line would benefit of particular colour code

The baseline management system fosters decision-making delegation

Figure 1 above shows how these interpretations of the rationalization logic as 'baseline system' and empowerment logic as 'delegation decision making' made them compatible, and even interdependent. With this understanding, employees manage to keep both logics and use them to develop creative innovation to improve their work conditions.
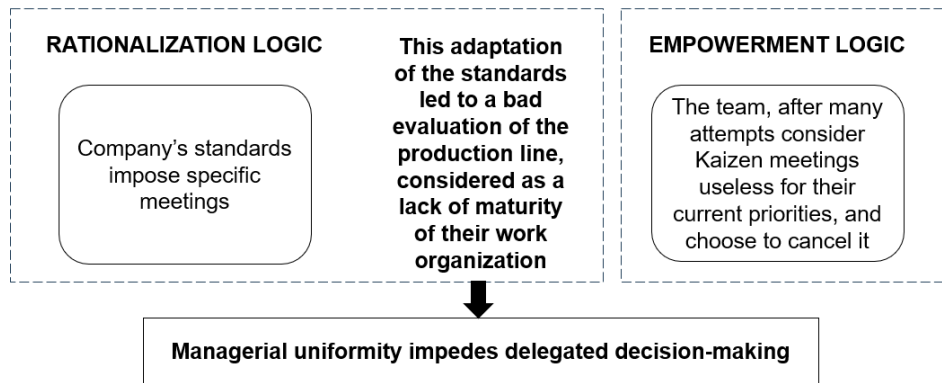
4.2. Perceived opposition between uniformity and delegated decision-making variants:

Kaizen meetings

In other situations, however, the CES implementation seems to be incompatible with an empowering work organization.

The first situation is connected with the continuous improvement meetings called "Kaizen". During one of these, several members of team expressed their frustration: *"I don't understand the point of this meeting... we don't even know where we stand on the issues we discussed last time... all we do is report, report, report. What's the point of this meeting? We're always coming up with the same information and nothing happens..."*. Facing this reluctance, the employee in charge of the Kaizen meetings opted for their suppression, clearly explaining the perceived contradiction between the uniform character of the CES and the local needs of the team: *"well, they're part of the CES routines, but if everyone thinks that they are useless, we don't do it and then we'll explain why it is not helpful"*. Few weeks later during the CES audit, the production line managers asked the team to organize again the Kaizen meeting because the CES auditors considered their removal as a lack of maturity of the production line, which led to a bad evaluation grade: *"they [the team] are against the CES, they always want it to be useful but sometimes you just have to accept it" (line manager 1)*. This decision confirmed the tensions linked with the institutional complexity and provoked workers disappointment and weariness: *"Frankly, we don't know what to do anymore. We had stopped this meeting just to take a breath, and now we're being asked to do it again for the assessment... This is at least the tenth time we've questioned the way we work, and I don't mind doing it again, but after a while you get tired of it too..."*.

Figure 2. Perceived opposition between logics' variants

RATIONALIZATION LOGIC	This adaptation of the standards led to a bad evaluation of the production line, considered as a lack of maturity of their work organization	EMPOWERMENT LOGIC
Company's standards impose specific meetings		The team, after many attempts consider Kaizen meetings useless for their current priorities, and choose to cancel it

Managerial uniformity impedes delegated decision-making

4.3. Perceived opposition between self-management and the baseline system variants: empowering teams

This last interaction deals with a project of empowering teams that was proposed to one sub-unit of the production line inspired by previous experiences that had been launched elsewhere within the company and promoted by top management as success stories. The managerial team of the production line decided to start a similar project animated by two employees from the support function and one front-line manager. After six months of preparation meetings, they proposed the project to the operational workers: *"Why this project? You know as well as I do that we don't meet the performance objectives. So how do we get there? What do we do? What we want to propose you is the creation of an empowering production line [...] It is an opportunity to prove to them [the top management] that through autonomy it is possible to reach this level of performance"* *(Front-line manager, during an observation).*

Few weeks after the announcement of the project, the line had to prepare the next CES audit with a mock assessment with an CES expert to identify the main improvements needed before the official one. During this mock assessment, the front-line manager and the CES expert identified in the empowering team area several modifications to fit with CES standards. The manager reported these suggestions to the empowering team project facilitator that replied: *"We are on a different project with [this sub-unit] ... We can't put different instructions; we have to be consistent in our approach. [...] I don't want to do what we did last year to please just one guy*

[the assessor]. [...] We're not going to work on something we just use for the assessment, and then we are going to tell them [the operational employees] 'well now that the assessment is over guys, you're going to be more autonomous'" (member of the support functions and facilitator of the empowering team project, during an observation).

In this interaction two issues are being opposed between. On the one hand, the front-line manager is concerned with the CES assessment and the grade that they will obtain for their industrial maturity. On the other hand, the member of the support functions is worried about the project recently launched and the consistency of their guidelines. The tension in this conversation emerges thus from the perceived opposition between the need to fit the standards and the initiative to create an alternative working organization based on the self- management spirit. In this situation, the rationalization logic seems thus incompatible with the principles held by the empowerment management logic.

Figure 3. Perceived opposition between rationalization and empowerment logics' variants
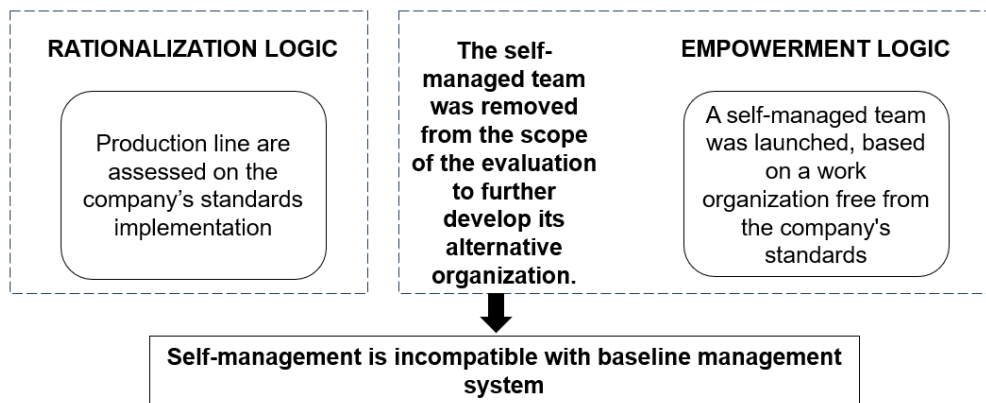
Considering the perceived opposition represented in the figure above, the management team had once again to choose between the two managerial logics. They decided to prioritize the empowering team project and managed to exclude the concerned sub-unit from the assessment in order to avoid conflictual guidelines. By this enactment, the two logics were geographically segmented to remove the contradictions (Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Smets et al., 2015).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study investigates the subjective experiences of frontline employees regarding post-bureaucratic managerial complexity. It is based on an in-depth case study of an Airbus production line concurrently implementing two managerial logics - empowerment and rationalization - each aiming to enhance organizational efficiency through distinct means. The findings indicate that these logics were perceived by the same employees as either complementary or contradictory, depending on the 'managerial logic variants' employed for legitimation. From this analysis, three principal theoretical contributions are proposed.

Firstly, this analysis shows that each institutional logic can be supported by multiple 'variants' that legitimize its pertinence. In our case, the logic of empowerment is described both as enabling delegated decision-making and self-management, and the logic of rationalization is presented as providing both a baseline management system and a uniform language within the company. These four variants aim to achieve better organizational efficiency but relying on distinctive approaches. This result contributes to the institutional logic literature by providing a finely nuanced understanding of the variation and ambiguity inherent to each institutional logic (Currie & Spyridonidis, 2016).

Secondly, the social situations studied showed that two variants – baseline system and delegated decision-making - helped to maintain institutional complexity by making the two logics complementary, while the two others – uniformization and self-management - led to tensions within the institutional complexity that forced actors to arbitrate between the managerial logic. For example, implementing standardized tools has been seen as facilitating the delegation of certain responsibilities to operational teams, such as those related to training or line-planning with the "line leaders". In this case, the employees could appropriate these standards and adapt them to their specific needs. In contrast, when these routines and tools were perceived as uniform, such as in the Kaizen meeting situation, actors felt some tensions with the empowerment logics, and had to choose between the two managerial logics. In the same way, in the example of the empowering line, their understanding of the project as a self-management organization has been

perceived as being in contradiction with the implementation of CES standards.

Figure 4. Managerial logics variants and compatibility
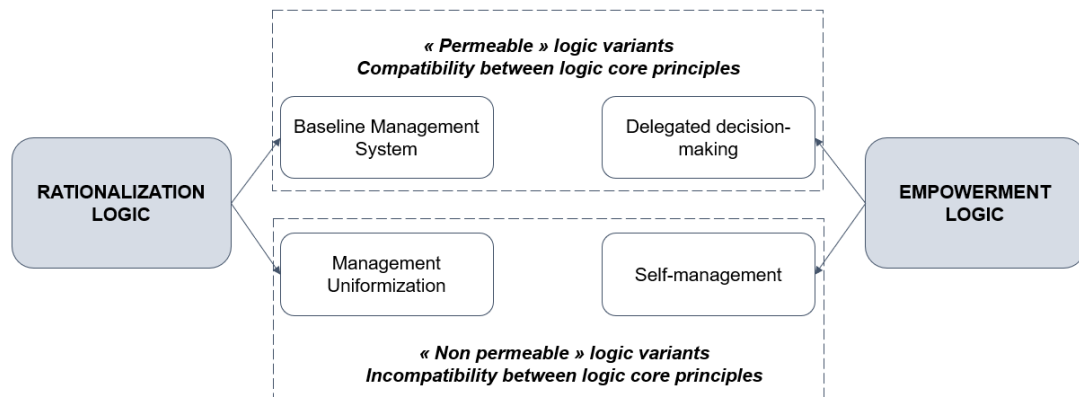
This result allows to shed new light on institutional logics compatibility by considering that logics' variants may have different degrees of compatibility; one considered "non-permeable" which makes the logic incompatible with the other, and the other called "permeable" which allows compatibility (see Figure 4 above). These results also enable to affirm that the nature of the institutional complexity does not only depend on the logics in presence, but rather on the frontline employees' legitimation. Put differently, it highlights that logics are not stable rationalities but rather complex schemes of thoughts continually negotiated by actors depending on their contextual needs (Svenningsen-Berthélem, Boxenbaum, & Ravasi, 2018). Based on these insights I propose the notion of "perceived institutional complexity" to apprehend the dynamic and subjective analysis of logics coexistence in situated contexts (Belz & Binder, 2017; Bévort & Suddaby, 2016; Everitt, 2013; Powell & Colyvas, 2008).

Finally, by studying a particular case of post-bureaucratic management the results allow to give a better understanding of how frontline employees manage the coexistence of 'old' and 'new' managerial practices (Bardon, Josserand, Sferrazzo, & Clegg, 2023; Josserand et al., 2006). I empirically showed that because institutional discourses were combining managerial logics without giving a clear understanding of which was the 'mean' and which was the final purpose of work organization, between standards compliance and employees' autonomy, the

responsibility to create a coherent management system was delegated to front-line employees. The latter face indeed in their work activity tensions between managerial logics that they have to deal with and that sometimes leads them in situations of organizational deviances (Sharma & Chillakuri, 2023). These insights enrich the post-bureaucratic literature by revealing the consequences of managerial complexity at the micro-level. From a managerial point of view, this observation also leads to encourage top management to develop an institutional discourse that clearly articulate the different managerial logics implemented to relieve operational teams, or to facilitate their discussion on managerial prescriptions.

To further this study, it could be insightful to analyze the institutional pressures that influence workers in their use of specific managerial logic variants. Another future avenue of research could also adopt a multi-level of these managerial analysis to see how they are translated depending in the different hierarchical levels (Høiland & Klemsdal, 2022).

REFERENCES

Allard-Poesi, F. (2015). Dancing in the dark: Making sense of managerial roles during strategic conversations. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *31*(3), 338–350.

Arnaud, N., & Mills, C. E. (2012). *Understanding interorganizational agency: a communication perspective. Group & Organization Management*, *37*(4).

Arnaud, N., Mills, C. E., & Legrand, C. (2016). Liberation through narrativity : a case of organization reconstruction through strategic storytelling. *Management International*, *20*(2), 107–118.

Ashforth, B. E., & Reingen, P. H. (2014). Functions of dysfunction: managing the dynamics of an organizational duality in a natural food cooperative. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *59*(3), 474–516.

Bardon, T., & Borzillo, S. (2016). Communities of practice: control or autonomy? *Journal of Business Strategy*, *37*(1), 11–18.

Bardon, T., & Josserand, E. (2018). Management innovations from a foucauldian perspective: time to take action. *M@n@gement*, *21*(4), 1244–1263.

Bardon, T., Josserand, E., Sferrazzo, R., & Clegg, S. (2023). Tensions between (Post)Bureaucratic and Neo-normative Demands: Investigating Employees' Subjective Positions at EurAirport. *British Journal of Management*, *34*(1), 57–71.

Belz, F. M., & Binder, J. K. (2017). Sustainable Entrepreneurship: A Convergent Process Model. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, *26*(1), 1–17.

Bévort, F., & Suddaby, R. (2016). Scripting professional identities: how individuals make sense of contradictory institutional logics. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, *3*(1), 17–38.

Carney, B. M., & Getz, I. (2016). *Freedom, Inc: How Corporate Liberation Unleashes Employee Potential and Business Performance*. International Creative Management.

Cassell, C., & Lee, B. (2016). Understanding translation work: the evolving interpretation of a trade union idea. *Organization Studies*, *38*(8), 1–22.

Castells, M. (2010). *The rise of the network society*. John Wiley & Sons.

Conger, J., & Kanungo, R. N. (1988). The empowerment process: integrating theory and practice. *Academy of Management Review*, *13*(3), 471–482.

Currie, G., & Spyridonidis, D. (2016). Interpretation of Multiple Institutional Logics on the Ground: Actors' Position, their Agency and Situational Constraints in Professionalized Contexts. *Organization Studies*, *37*(1), 77–97.

Dalpiaz, E., Rindova, V., & Ravasi, D. (2016). Combining logics to transform organizational agency. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *61*(3), 347–392.

Demers, C., & Gond, J. P. (2020). The Moral Microfoundations of Institutional Complexity: Sustainability implementation as compromise-making at an oil sands company. *Organization Studies*, *41*(4), 563–586.

Everitt, J. G. (2013). Inhabitants moving in: Prospective sense-making and the reproduction of inhabited institutions in teacher education. *Symbolic Interaction*, *36*(2), 177–196.

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating Rigor Using Thematic Analysis: A

Hybrid Approach of Inductive and Deductive Coding and Theme Development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *5*(1), 80–92.

Fiol, C. M., Pratt, M., & O'Connor, E. J. (2009). Managing intractable identity conflicts. *Academy of Management Review*, *34*(1), 32–55.

Friedland, R., & Alford, R. R. (1991). Bringing society back in: symbols, practices and institutional contradictions.

Furnari, S. (2019). Situating frames and institutional logics: The social situation as a key institutional micro-foundation. In *Microfoundations of institutions* (Vol. 65B, pp. 193–209).

Green, S. E., Babb, M., & Alpaslan, C. M. (2008). Institutional field dynamics and the competition between institutional logics. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *22*(1), 40–73.

Greenwood, R., Raynard, M., Kodeih, F., Micelotta, E. R., & Lounsbury, M. (2011). Institutional complexity and organizational responses. *Academy of Management Annals*, *5*(1), 317–371.

Gümüsay, A. A., Smets, M., & Morris, T. (2020). "God at work": engaging central and incompatible institutional logics through elastic hybridity. *Academy of Management Journal*, *63*(1), 124–154.

Hallett, T., & Ventresca, M. J. (2006). Inhabited institutions: social interactions and organizational forms in Gouldner's Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy. *Theory and Society*, *35*(2), 213–236.

Heckscher, C., & Donnellon, A. (1994). *The post-bureaucratic organization: New perspectives on organizational change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Høiland, G. C. L., & Klemsdal, L. (2022). *Organizing professional work and services through institutional complexity – how institutional logics and differences in organizational roles matter. Human Relations*, *75*(2).

Jay, J. (2013). Navigating paradox as a mechanism of change and innovation in hybrid organizations. *Academic of Management Journal*, *56*(1), 137–159.

Joffre, C., & Loilier, T. (2012). L'adaptation vue comme un processus de régulation. Le rôle et la dynamique de la règle dans une organisation du secteur social et médico-social français. *Management International*, *16*(2), 39–55.

Josserand, E., Teo, S., & Clegg, S. (2006). From bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic: the difficulties of transition. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *19*(1), 54–64.

Kirkman, B. L., Rosen, B., Tsluk, P. E., Gibson, C. B., Tesluk, P. E., & Gibson, C. B. (2004). The impact of team empowerment on virtual team performance: the moderating role of face-to-face interaction. *Academy of Management Journal*, *47*(2), 175–192.

Lee, M. Y., & Edmondson, A. C. (2017). Self-managing organizations: exploring the limits of less-hierarchical organizing. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, *37*, 1–24.

Lounsbury, M., Steele, C. W. J., Wang, M. S., & Toubiana, M. (2021). New Directions in the Study of Institutional Logics: From Tools to Phenomena. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *47*, 261–280.

Lowe, J., & Oliver, N. (1997). High-performance manufacturing: evidence from the automotive components industry. *Organization Studies*, *18*(5), 783–798.

Martin, G., Currie, G., Weaver, S., Finn, R., & McDonald, R. (2017). Institutional complexity and individual responses: delineating the boundaries of partial autonomy. *Organization Studies*,

38(1), 103–127.

Pache, A.-C., & Santos, F. (2013a). Embedded in hybrid contexts: how individuals in organizations respond to competing institutional logics. In *Institutional Logics in Action, Part B* (Vol. 39, pp. 3–35). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Pache, A.-C., & Santos, F. (2013b). Inside the hybrid organzation: selective coupling as a repsonse to competing institutional logics. *Academy of Management Journal*, *56*(4), 972–1001.

Powell, W. W., & Colyvas, J. A. (2008). Microfoundations of Institutional Theory. In *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* (pp. 276–298).

Purdy, J. M., & Gray, B. (2009). Conflicting logics, mechanisms of diffusion, and multilevel dynamics in emerging institutional fields. *Academy of Management Journal*, *52*(2), 355–380.

Quattrone, P. (2015). Governing Social Orders, Unfolding Rationality, and Jesuit Accounting Practices: A Procedural Approach to Institutional Logics. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *60*(3), 411–445.

Reed, M. (2005). Beyond the iron cage? Bureaucracy and democracy in the knowledge economy and society. In *The Values of Bureaucracy* (pp. 115–140).

Reichhart, A., & Holweg, M. (2007). Lean distribution: concepts, contributions, conflicts. *International Journal of Production Research*, *45*(16), 3699–3722.

Sharma, N., & Chillakuri, B. K. (2023). Positive deviance at work: a systematic review and directions for future research. *Personnel Review*, *52*(4), 933–954.

Silverman, D. (2016). *Qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Smith, W. K., & Besharov, M. L. (2019). Bowing before dual gods: how structured flexibility sustains organizational hybridity. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *64*(1), 1–44.

Spicer, A. (2011). Stewart Clegg, Martin Harris and Harro Höpfl (2011). Managing Modernity: Beyond Bureaucracy? Oxford: Oxford University Press. *M@n@gement*, *14*(4), 252–262.

Sturdy, A., Wright, C., & Wylie, N. (2016). Managers as consultants: the hybridity and tensions of neo-bureaucratic management. *Organization*, *23*(2), 184–205.

Suddaby, R., Cooper, D. J., & Greenwood, R. (2007). Transnational regulation of professional services: Governance dynamics of field level organizational change. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, *32*(4–5), 333–362.

Svenningsen-Berthélem, V., Boxenbaum, E., & Ravasi, D. (2018). Individual responses to multiple logics in hybrid organizing: The role of structural position. *M@n@gement*, *21*(4), 1306–1328.

Thornton, P. H. (2004). *Markets from culture: institutional logics and organizational decisions in higher education publishing*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Thornton, P. H., & Ocasio, W. (1999). Institutional logics and the historical contingency of power in organizations: executive succession in the higher educating publishing industry, 1985-1990. *The American Journal of Sociology*, *105*(3), 801–843.

Thornton, P. H., Ocasio, W., & Lounsbury, M. (2012). *The institutional logics perspective: a new approach to culture, structure, and process*. New-York: Oxford University Press.

Tracey, P., Phillips, N., & Jarvis, O. (2011). Bridging institutional entrepreneurship and the creation of new organizational forms: a multilevel model. *Organization Science*, *22*(1), 60–

80.

Weber, M. (1964). *L'éthique protestante et l'esprit du capitalisme*. Paris: Librairie Pion.

Westphal, J. D., & Zajac, E. J. (2001). Decoupling Policy from Practice: The Case of Stock Repurchase Programs. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *46*(2), 202.

Womack, J. P., & Jones, D. T. (1996). Beyond Toyota: how to root out waste and pursue perfection. *Harvard Business Review*, *74*(5), 140–158.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods.* (L. Bickman & D. J. Rog, Eds.), *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research*, *5*(5). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Zilber, T. B. (2002). Institutionalization as an interplay between actions, meanings, and actors. *Academy of Management Journal*, *45*(1), 234–254.

APPENDIX. INTERVIEWEES' INFORMATION

N°	Function	Date	Gender	Age	Position seniority	Company seniority	Duration (minutes)
1	Team manager 1	18/10/2017	H	36	2014	2001	65
2	Support function 1	14/02/2018	H	37	2015	2004	65
3	Support function 2	15/02/2018	H	36	2017	2001	57
4	HR manager 1	21/02/2018	F	29	2014	2012	53
5	Team manager 2	22/02/2018	H	44	2010	1998	60
6	Worker 1	18/04/2018	H	54	2008	1990	40
7	Worker 2	18/04/2018	H	25	2017	2015	36
8	Team manager 3	20/04/2018	H	58	2015	1982	60
9	Support function 3	20/04/2018	F	38	2017	2003	47
10	Support function 4	23/04/2018	H	27	2016	2016	56
11	Support function 5	23/04/2018	H	26	2017	2017	29
12	Support function 6	25/04/2018	H	36	2013	2005	47
13	Support function 7	25/04/2018	H	43	2013	2009	61
14	Support function 8	15/05/2018	H	46	2014	2010	43
15	Line manager 1	15/05/2018	H	54	2010	1990	89
16	Support function 9	23/05/2018	F	33	2015	2010	49
17	HR manager 2	03/10/2018	H	35	2018	2015	68
18	Expert empowerment 1	18/10/2018	H	52	2017	2002	58
19	Expert standards 1	18/10/2018	H	39	2016	2004	66
20	Expert empowerment 2	20/10/2018	F	31	2018	2013	73
21	Expert standards 2	24/10/2018	H	39	2018	1998	66
22	Technical manager	24/10/2018	H	42	2015	2010	34
23	Expert standards 3	07/11/2018	H	25	2016	2016	60
24	Expert standards 4	13/11/2018	F	44	2015	2012	38
25	Unit manager 1	15/11/2018	H	38	2015	2006	58
26	Expert standards 5	16/01/2019	H	43	2012	EXT	60
27	Worker 3	12/02/2019	H	24	2016	2016	34
28	Worker 4	12/02/2019	H	57	2013	1979	37
29	Line leader 1	12/02/2019	H	34	2015	2004	37
30	Line leader 2	19/02/2019	H	28	2011	2011	37
31	Expert standards 6	21/02/2019	H	42	2012	2002	83
32	Expert empowerment 3	05/03/2019	F	35	2018	2011	63
33	Expert empowerment 4	05/03/2019	H	37	2018	2003	28
34	Expert empowerment 5	07/03/2019	H	46	2017	2001	56
35	Expert standards 7	12/03/2019	F	42	2016	2012	81
36	Expert empowerment 6	12/03/2019	H	26	2018	2010	45
37	Line leader 3	12/03/2019	H	44	2012	2003	33
38	Expert standards 8	13/03/2019	F	47	2016	2002	71
39	Line manager 2	14/03/2019	H	52	2019	1989	58
40	Line manager 3	18/03/2019	H	55	2010	1986	56
41	Team manager 4	21/03/2019	H	42	2019	1999	49
42	Unit manager 2	22/03/2019	H	44	2018	1989	61

43	Financial manager	25/03/2019	H	38	2015	2000	70
44	Team manager 1	26/03/2019	H	36	2014	2001	44
45	Unit manager 1	26/03/2019	H	38	2015	2006	38
46	Expert standards 9	04/04/2019	F	36	2015	2012	50
47	Expert standards 10	04/04/2019	H	37	2018	2005	58
48	Expert empowerment 7	05/04/2019	H	54	2017	2007	61
49	Unit manager 3	14/04/2019	F	52	2013	1990	47
50	Expert empowerment 8	09/05/2019	F	35	2018	2011	15
51	Expert standards 11	10/05/2019	H	38	2013	2010	48
52	Team manager 2	14/05/2019	H	44	2010	1998	43
53	Expert standards 12	14/05/2019	F	32	2015	2010	57
54	Expert empowerment 9	14/05/2019	F	44	2017	1998	54
55	HR manager 2	21/05/2019	H	35	2018	2015	33
56	Expert standards 13	24/05/2019	H	38	2018	2019	76