

Analysis of Affective Discourse in the Change Process of the Employment Relationship Model: Environment Management through Collective Bargaining

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ABSTRACT

This paper covers research whose goal was to analyse affective changes in the process of change in the labour relations model that was consolidated throughout the 1990s. Based on a case study, the focus was on the emotional content expressed by the protagonists in relation to this collective bargaining framework. In conducting the analysis, we used the wide range of procedures provided by Discourse Analysis (DA). Part of this analysis focused on the protagonists' emotional management of the early stages of the negotiation. The results let us delve deeper into the affective nature of this process, thereby expanding the light shed by other theoretical and methodological perspectives on this change in the labour relations model.

Keywords: collective bargaining, socio-affective dynamics, risk society, management discourse.

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INTRODUCTION

The Neo-Liberal policies drawn up in the 1980s were to make a decisive contribution to breaking the Keynesian ‘Social Contract’. The reforms introduced by highly Conservative ‘Free Market’ governments led by Ronald Reagan and by Margaret Thatcher to halt the industrial decline of the 1970s proved a watershed in labour relations. The casualties of these reforms included ‘Social Contracts’, the decision-making capacity of Nation States, and Trade Unions.

Under the impact of all these changes, the standard model of labour relations and formal regulation created after The Second World War began to weaken. New, more flexible, tailored labour relationship models began to spring up. As a result, a new model of labour relations took hold, inspired solely by the Capitalism of the English-speaking world, focusing on the short-term and the financialisation of the economy as a mechanism for inculcating social discipline (Martín Artiles, 2014).

Despite the decades that have gone by since the 1990s, this process of change still sparks heated debate on the value and nature of the new labour relations model. Some stress the steady loss of social and labour rights that have come in its wake. Others defend it as objective, necessary, and even ‘natural’. Be that as it may, the truth is that it has had huge labour, social, and human consequences.

Given its multidimensional nature, this shift from a Fordist to a Post-Fordist model of labour relations¹ has been approached from many angles and in various spheres. Since the change did not happen all by itself,

there was a clear need to research the protagonists’ actions in making the paradigm shift possible.

The first step was to take their motivations and strategies into account. One of the pioneering studies in this regard was made by Kochan, Katz, and McKersie (1993). While openly acknowledging that the context did not favour its protagonists equally, these authors described Management’s strategies as active and the union ones as defensive, concluding that it was Managerial Capitalism that not only defined the traditional Fordist model of labour relations² but that also drove the quest for its successor. From a more subjective perspective (and considering Capitalism’s evolutionary path)³, Boltanski and Chiapello (2002) felt that social actors should have been much more aware of the risks posed by these changes. They argue that if social players had been more awake, they would have delved deeper in their analyses and resisted the new scheme of things much more fiercely.

These works furnish two major examples of how the protagonists’ actions during this transitional period were seen. Yet actors’ feelings need to be taken into account because agreement, persuasion, domination, coercion, and resistance are coloured and altered by emotions such as pride, fear, shame, and so on expressed during actors’ interactions. Accordingly, the affective universe forms an integral part of this study. No sociological analysis should exclude the emotions felt by the subjects taking part in a given phenomenon, event, structure or social process (Bericat, 2012).

1 Regulation Theory (Aglietta, 1979) was drawn on to identify both models regarding: (1) denomination; (2) the chronological division established in relation to the sundry *Capitalist accumulation models* and their economic and social regulatory regimes. The period covered by the paper falls under *Fordist* regulation, which evolved during a period of intensive accumulation between 1930 and 1975. The beginning of a period of Post-Fordist regulation characterised by a financial accumulation regime began around 1990. The gap between the first and second periods was marked by a struggle for hegemony between the two models.

2 Focusing on the US automobile industry, they analysed the decline of the traditional system of collective negotiations ushered in by The New Deal. The study, which was concluded in 1986, stressed the transformation in labour relations based on business reorganisation driven by competitive pressures. This paradigm shift created an alternative non-unionised system based on a set of sophisticated Human Resource management policies.

3 Boltanski and Chiapello (2002) focused their analysis on the ideologies underpinning Capitalism — an approach that followed in the Weberian tradition. The ‘Spirit of Capitalism’ was seen as a set of beliefs linked with the Capitalist Order and that served to justify and underpin it.

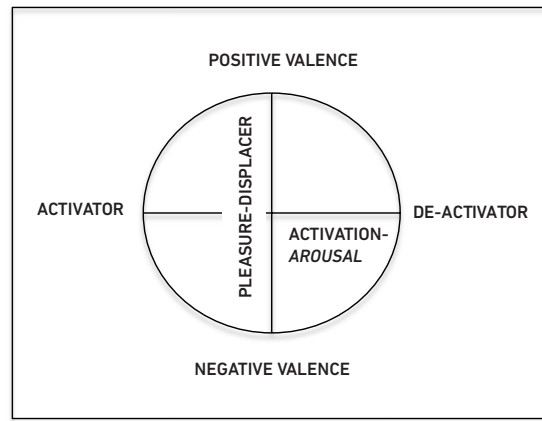
Analysing the change in the labour relationship model from its most affective dimension would reveal many highly subjective meanings and nuances. One of the merits of this approach is that by looking at the shift in model from new angles, it lets us delve into and describe the changes in ways that have been barely explored. As Hochschild rightly argues, Sociology will find it hard to shed light on the real world if it remains blind to feelings. They need to be taken into account if we are to reflect upon the world around us. (2008: 111)

Despite the vital role feelings and emotions play in our lives, they have largely been ignored by the Sociology of Labour Relations. To help redress this shortcoming, are goals are to: (a) Identify the socio-affective patterns generated by the actors and their evolution throughout the period studied; (b) Describe the dynamics of the socio-affective relationship through which the transformation took place; (c) Relate the most affective dimension of this process to the formation of those new subjectivities and identities that characterise our society, contemporary Capitalism and current labour organisations.

By ‘affectivity’⁴ we mean the emotional tone that permeates Man’s life. Affection, according to Russell (1980), can be understood as a set of dimensions that are inextricably intertwined and can be represented by a spatial model. Russell’s circumplex model gives a representation of cognitive structure that both experts and laymen alike use to conceptualise affection.

The resulting model of affective states⁵ lets us graphically situate their components around a circle split into the four quadrants produced by the intersection of two dimensions: the evaluative (pleasant/

Figure 1 Russell’s affective diagram (1980)



unpleasant) and the level of activation or arousal (high/low). This scheme creates four semantic fields. The dimensional vision (which does not provide a discrete measure of affectivity) gives scope for generating a whole series of *affective patterns* with many descriptive and comparative options.

However, we must not forget that it is society and culture that modulate and facilitate our emotions. The expression of all kinds of affection can only be understood in relation to both, especially when great transformations are afoot (which was the case here, entailing as it did a radical change in the labour relations model).

Many of these new scenarios will bear on the debate as to whether we have crossed the threshold of modernity or not — a discussion that offers key reflections for grasping this change (Bericat, 2017, 2019). Aspects such as: (a) risk and globalisation (Beck, 2001, 2002); (b) the disappearance of the social actor and the trend towards individualisation (Touraine, 2009); (c) the shift from industrialism to informationalism as a technological paradigm (Castells, 2000) all directly bear on the new labour relations paradigm.

Beginning in the early 90s, the notion that modern society is mainly based on logic, reason and order

4 Affectiveness is manifested in *feelings* and *emotions*, although the basic nature of emotions has been considered as the keystone of affectiveness (Mora and Martín, 2010). Feelings are interpreted as the subjective expression of emotions (Fernández and Carrera, 2007).

5 Fernández and Carrera (2007: 314) propose a model based on contributions made by Russell (1989), Kercher (1992), Fernández-Dols *et al.* (2002), and García (2002).

came under attack. Here, many felt that reflections linked to the notion of 'Post-Modernity' offered better explanations of the way society really worked (Sarries, 1993). These ideas also posed new challenges for the role of traditional actors in labour relations given that they envisaged novel actions and commitments, and a different, dynamic view of the world of work (Vega, 2006). However, it was not union pressure, labour disputes, or self-management proposals that led to this paradigm shift but rather companies themselves (Marín Artiles, 1999).

A host of new challenges sprang up from the cracks in Fordism and Taylorism⁶, favouring the emergence of a host of employers' initiatives for creating new productive systems and forms of work organisation. On the one hand, a new, much more flexible production system was imposed as new life was breathed into old *laissez-faire* ideas and capital and labour markets were deregulated (Alonso and Fernández, 2013). On the other hand, traditional mass production and assembly lines proved too inflexible for uncertain, rapidly-changing markets and could not meet the need for diverse products and swift response to turbulent demand patterns. As a result, New Forms of Work Organisation (NFWO) were drawn up to deal with these shortcomings. These changes were accompanied by new management models⁷ trumpeting 'pro-business values'. The *leitmotif* of triumphalist discourses in management literature and the unrelenting stress on workers' commitment to the company played a vital role in pushing these changes through (Fernández 2007a).

6 Although many studies begin by speaking of Post-Taylorism and 'Lean Production' others consider it more prudent to speak of 'The Crisis of Taylorism'. Here, Martín Artiles (1999) argues that NFWO does not necessarily involve a technical change in the basic principles of Taylorism, of work organisation, or of what work is.

7 These new forms of work organisation and management do not always imply a radical change. In most cases they end up partially complementing traditional work organisation (Martín Artiles, 1999).

In its endless quest for excellence, a flexible company hides its most daring transformations under a new culture based on the myth of 'Total Quality', which turns out to be the best mirror of change (Sarries, 1993). New schools of thought (such as Critical Management Studies) were sceptical of these management techniques given their highly subjective nature (Fernández, 2007b). All these 'corporate culture' programmes seek to boost control over the affective domain in a systematic, legitimised fashion. Human Resources (HR) and 'Total Quality' programmes are used to this end, shaping employees' views (Gorroño, 2008).

Methodologically speaking, the research was based on two key elements: (1) The in-depth study of the change in the employment relationship model carried out at the Opel España plant in Figueruelas (Zaragoza, Spain); (2) Analysis of the relational dynamics of the actors running the negotiations through communiqués issued throughout the collective bargaining process.

The main functional value of these communiqués was to inform the other party in the negotiation. However, as contextualised written productions, these communiqués constituted stories in which the actors exchanged statements and, with them, feelings and emotions. Accordingly, we chose a highly qualitative approach to these materials, using sundry tools and procedures falling within the broad scope of Discourse Analysis (DA).

In drawing up the corpus of texts, the focus was put on the 1990s, including the communications issued by both Management (D) and the Company Committee (CE). Finally, given the highly specific nature of this research, we included only those bulletins issued during negotiations of the 'peer agreements'. Once this criterion was applied, steps were taken to ensure the corpus exhibited sufficient consistency and contextual significance. The total sample was made up of 136 communications distributed as shown in Figure 2. Once the corpus was configured, all those terms and expressions directly or indirectly indicating

Figure 2 Total communications included in the Text Corpus

Convenio	6th		8th		10th	
Year	1992		1996		2001	
Actor	Management	Works Committee	Management	Works Committee	Management	Works Committee
No. of bulletins	27	25	19	21	22	22
Contextual meaning	Shift from mass production to flexible production		External and internal globalisation		Loss-making Financial Yera	

The analysis of the affective patterns so generated fell into one or other of the following two clearly differentiated blocks:

- (1) The first block focused on analysis of the affective management carried out by the protagonists in relation to the wider setting in which each negotiation took place.
- (2) The second block focused on the affective management of the content of the negotiation agenda in each collective agreement.

Below we present some of the main results from the first analytical block (that is to say, the trading setting). The fact that much broader forces partly shape labour practices and outcomes made us focus part of the analysis on the economic background to the paradigm shift in labour relations.

This affective management was carried out by the protagonists in the first negotiation sessions, specifically in: the bulletins corresponding to the 2nd negotiation session in the 1992 and 1996 agreements, and the 3rd session in the 2001 agreement. The main content for analytical purposes was found in just 6 bulletins out of the total sample. These bulletins contained valuable information on the backdrop against which negotiations were conducted.

THE TALE OF A DECADE

Reporting on the broader setting within which negotiations take place offers arguments to the parties

involved. Here, “the tactic is to persuade the other party to make concessions and to come up with counter-arguments to the other side’s proposals” (Carrier, 1988: 179).

As we shall see throughout this section, Management skilfully used this tactic in the first negotiating sessions in reporting on the Company’s present and future. The Works Committee, for its part, hardly offered an alternative affective description to Management’s appraisal, focusing instead on its own set of claims. This is why we shall first analyse the affective discourse made by Management. Second, we will reflect on the extent to which the Works Committee consented to or resisted Management’s position.

MANAGEMENT’S APPROACH TO AFFECTIVE ELEMENTS: THE LANGUAGE OF RISKS

The Management view of the economic setting and the steps needed to deal with it can be seen as forming an overarching argument. It was firmly embedded in a whole series of descriptive, informative, and even explanatory sequences that were used to reinforce a persuasive discourse that constantly harped on ‘risk’.

As Camps says: “The present is full of uncertainties and risks, to which we react emotionally with fear or look for a solution that holds out hope” (2011: 208). This was to prove the basic affective scheme used by Management throughout its discourse. The ‘risk’ paradigm was linked to the perception of a hostile, turbulent environment, while the ‘risk avoidance’ paradigm was

Figure 3 Contextual elements, goals and lines of action

1992	1996	2001
DESCRIPTION OF THE SETTING		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japanese competition • Sales: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marked US decline - Europe holds its ground (German growth spurt) - Spanish decline: 'credit squeeze' • European Demand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1970-1990 constant growth 1990 stagnation • Forecast recession in Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Globalising production: Developing Countries - Product Globalisation: Other Company car plants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow-down in demand • Production over-capacity • Price-cutting over and above features offered • A loss booked for the Financial Year
TARGETS, AIMS, AND PROPOSED ACTIONS		
Do not lose COMPETITIVENESS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the company more cost-competitive • Achieve top results • Customer satisfaction 	Boost COMPETITION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the lid on costs • Constant improvement of product quality • Attract investment 	Restore PROFITABILITY
Proposed actions	Proposed actions	Proposed actions
QUALITY NETWORK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplified production • Teamwork • Continuous improvement • Just In Time (JIT) 	BE RESPONSIBLE Do nothing to harm competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut jobs • Stop recruitment • Cut labour costs

linked the Management's proposals at various junctures during the negotiations. The strategy was basically one of inducing fear and then holding out hope.

Discursively speaking, these two paradigms typify the language surrounding risks⁸ and cover two kinds of enunciative modes⁹ — the epistemic and the deontic. In each of them, two extremes are conjured up, letting the speaker position himself wherever he likes. The epistemic mode, which bears on *knowledge*, is framed

within the parameters of 'certainty' and 'likelihood'. The deontic mode, the one bearing on the *duty to be* or the *duty to do*, falls within the parameters of 'permissiveness' and 'duty'.

Before looking at the special features of this approach, Figure 3 gives a brief outline-summary of the key elements on which the Management will rest all its affectivity-based arguments.

The perception of the broader setting or a discourse rooted in fear

As noted above, Management systematically induced fear when describing the broader business setting. However, all this emotional artifice was mainly concentrated during the negotiation of the 1992 collective agreement, dropping off as the decade wore on.

8 Together with these two paradigms, one should also note a third, namely the Risk-Reward one (Íñiguez, 2006).

9 Modality is manifested through two kinds of relations: (a) those between an author and the statements he makes in his texts; (b) those between the author's statements and his interlocutors (Calsamiglia and Tusón, 2007).

Yet one cannot assume that the perception of ‘risk’ slowly waned as a result. Instead, it was the way in which ‘risk’ was formulated that changed. Here, one should note that in Management’s statements made in 1992 and 1996 to describe the situation, risks were framed with phrases such as: “it is feared”, “it is thought” (1992); “will probably occur in the near future” (1996). In this corporate version of virtual reality, the threats loomed in a not-so-distant future. In the 2001 agreement, Management conjured the threat (to jobs) in a much more direct way: *A loss-making Financial Year* (2001).

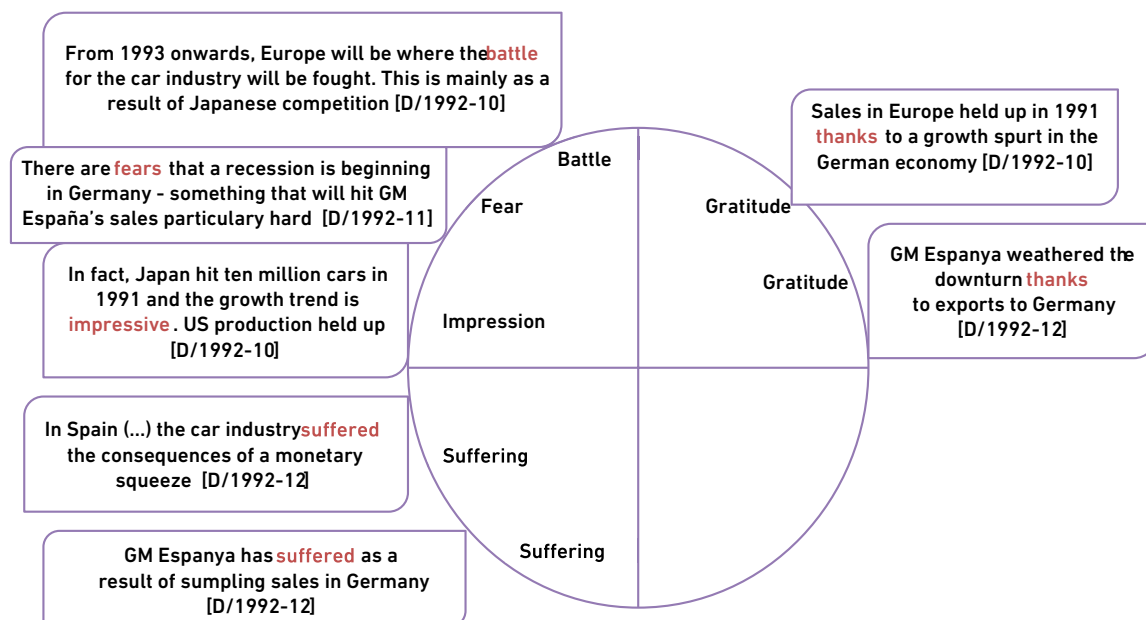
Curiously enough, the less reliable knowledge of the risk is, the greater the affective component in the discourse, and *vice versa*. It is likely that one does not have to conjure up a palpable risk and gild the lily to make the target audience quake with fear. That said (taking a constructionist perspective); sparking emotion often does the trick. This certainly seems to be the case when one looks at the affective tricks

resorted to in describing the wider economic setting in the 6th collective agreement (1992). This accord proved the keystone for consolidating the new labour relationship model.

The main process for articulating affective content in this agreement bore on the steady rise in competition. Management very skilfully directed the semantics in the negotiations to ensure the actors (Japan, Germany, Spain, and the Spanish Government) played their corporately allotted roles.

As the affective diagram shows, Management’s remark on “an impressive, growing trend” revealed its admiration for Japan’s production capacity. This not only heightened fear of a highly capable enemy but also let Management project its impression of Japanese workers as incredibly hard-working and utterly committed to the company. This was a side-swipe at Spanish workers, who were supposedly shaped by a different work ethic. Within the argument framework,

Figure 4 Management’s affective pattern to describe the economic setting in 1992



Japan was given a key role not only because it was seen as both the biggest and most palpable threat: “As of 1993 Europe will be the industrial battlefield of the car industry mainly due to Japanese competition”.

Germany also occupies a prominent place in this diagram. In principle, this nation is the only actor that — through the *Gratitude* label — lies in a quadrant corresponding to positive affections. This leaves Germany’s image intact and all that it represents for both the Company and for Europe.

On the other hand, the only negative reference to Germany is Management’s fear that this nation may have a recession — something reinforced by the statement that Germany has been the ‘economic locomotive’ pulling the rest of Europe and Spain in its train. This remark nuances Management’s apparent gratitude, thereby introducing yet another element of fear — namely the dire consequences for Spain of any major downturn in the German economy.

This apparent gratitude for the role played by Germany reaches its starkest expression in Management’s reference to Spain, which occupy the quadrant in the diagram reserved for low activity and negative valence. The comment is an unflattering one: “GM España has weathered the fall in sales thanks to Germany.” On this occasion, the Directorate presents GM España as a mere passive agent, a victim incapable of standing on its own two feet to face the dangers that lie in wait for it. Thus, one can see how Germany and Spain have been cleverly woven into the discourse, arousing highly differentiated feelings: compassion and pity for Spain, gratitude and admiration for almighty Germany.

This semantic process of humanisation was to be used widely in the Spanish car industry, with the sector being painted as the victim of the Government’s ‘credit squeeze’. Making a victim out of Spain’s automobile sector let Management wriggle out of any blame for the plant’s mediocre results by blaming the Government instead. The government thus became the Company’s and the workers’ common enemy.

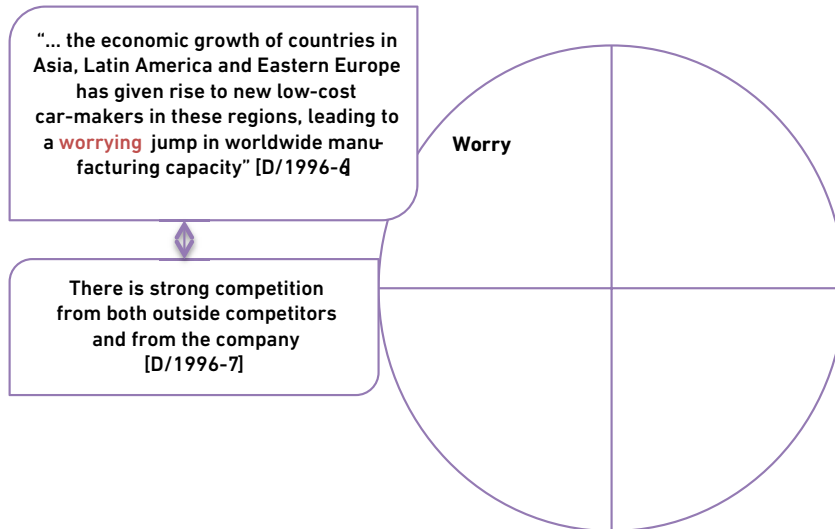
The Directorate resorted to the same symbolic strategies to describe the business setting in the negotiations for the 8th Agreement in 1996, albeit resorting to less emotionally charged language. Discursively speaking, one should recall that the perception of risk in 1996 was based on higher probabilities than in 1992 but on less certainty than in 2001.

That said the source of Management’s worries was the same — namely rising competition. This fear was semantically mediated by other aspects: (1) The main threats were seen as coming from Asia, Latin American, and Eastern Europe, as well as from the Company’s plants scattered throughout the rest of the world; (2) The combined threat posed by players lay not so much in their organisational virtues as in their low production costs. The argument underpinned Management’s affective strategy for the 1996 collective bargaining negotiations.

One of the most striking aspects of this affective pattern was the caution with which Management broached internal competition. In principle, the main worry concerned external competition. Yet even though Management avoided any direct reference to internal competition [i.e. from other Spanish plants], it cunningly suggested it through the term “*Very Strong*”. This let Management subtly warn the workers of the peril while shirking any Company blame for the risk.

To this end, Management wrote two clearly differentiated paragraphs, one alluding to the external competition and the other to the internal kind. Although Management did not hesitate to call the Opel Corsa ‘a global car’, it was keen to avoid GM plants competing for manufacture of the same model. Building a collective identity requires semantically differentiating oneself from ‘other car-makers’, presenting them affectively as the true agents of risk.

Finally, the affective component was missing from the negotiating climate for the 2001 collective agreement. Management informed workers in a neutral fashion that the Company had booked a loss for that

Figure 5 Management's affective strategy to describe the broader business setting in 1996

Financial Year. Some theories hold that fear always stems from uncertainty but it can also arise from perils that are staring one in the face. The difference lies in how the threat is expressed. A Company 'in the red' does not need to conjure up threats to frighten workers because the danger is plain for all to see.

Proposals for action or the hope of avoiding the risk

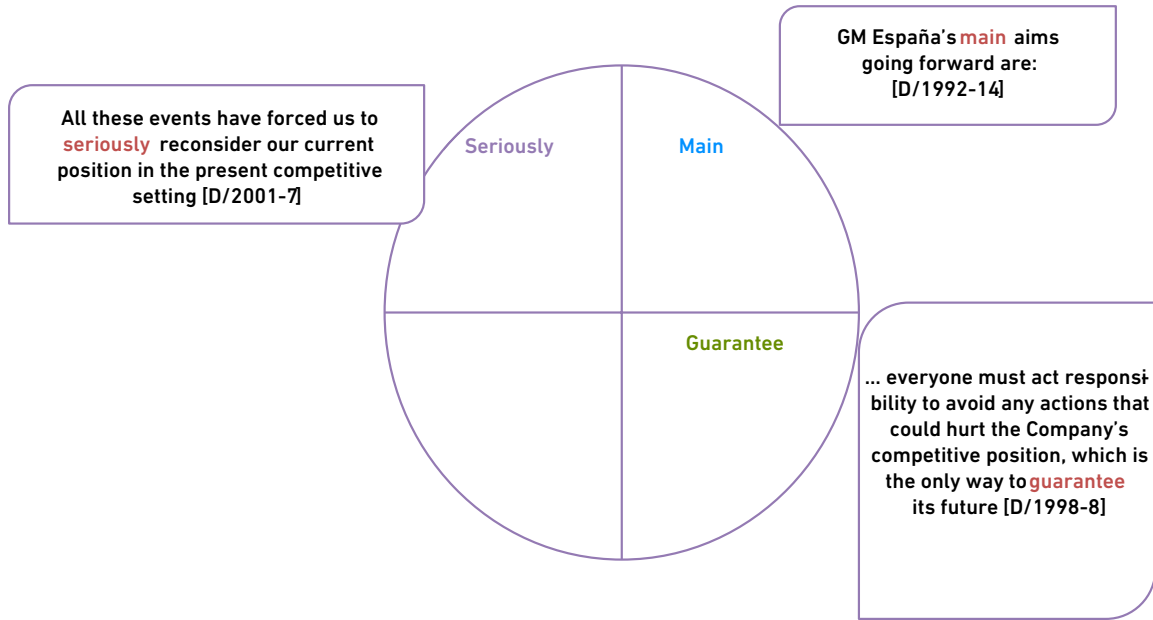
Once the description of the economic setting has made workers fearful of the identified risks (whatever their likelihood), Management then has to give workers hope that they can avoid them. In other words, inducing fear of the threats posed by a hostile economic setting is just one half of the strategy. The other is spurring workers to action to either mitigate or avoid those risks. Aristotle said that one of the weapons in a politician's rhetorical armoury is the ability to instil fear in his listeners. Yet this also goes hand-in-hand with the ability to instil confidence when suggesting a solution. Fear and hope, and fear and trust, are two powerful pairs of emotions and often provide what Camps (2011) calls *the prophylactic nature of fear* — something that will be dealt with in this section.

As can be seen in the following diagram, Management's affective stress in presenting its main lines of action was only slightly less than that found in its description of the business setting. In this case, the few emotional references made are indirect ones.

In general, the 1992 and 1996 agreements struck a balance between threats (*challenges and risks*) and potential (*success and opportunities*), endowing the discourse with measured optimism: *Successfully meeting future challenges* (1992), *Opportunities and risks faced by Opel España* (1996).

The situation changed in the 2001 agreement. Just as risk perception over the decade shifted from the realms of possibility to near certainty, so Management proposals for risk avoidance also shifted from permissiveness to obligation. Some features of the discourse are highlighted below, the affective scheme of which boils down to winning people over to face fear (1992), encouraging them to avoid fear (1996), and then forcing them to live with fear (2001).

Figure 6 The pattern of Management's affective approach in presenting its lines of action



The affective discourse reached its zenith at the beginning of the decade, with peaking levels of activation and positive valence. Management's presentation of a new manufacturing system "*opposed to mass production*" and its explanation of how "*... to achieve a lean organisation*") was put together with great skill and precision. Against the background of expansion in Japanese car production and foreseeing an "*industrial battlefield*", Management conveyed its proposed actions with great pride ("*GM España's great goals for the future*"), noble aims designed to enlist the support of the company's workforce in the fight for *competitiveness*. With workers now cast in the role of heroes, the Management argument called on them to use the new weapons to hand, and to accept changes in the production system and plant organisation as part of the overall battle plan.

Management used its expert knowledge to exploit fear of Japan's production capacity and decided to beat

the Asian giant at its own game. The fear induced by Management's description of risk in 1992 was a softening-up move before imbuing workers with the confidence and pride needed to win the business battle later on. In 1992, risk was seen more as an opportunity than as a threat. This positive vision of risk as a source of energy, and the active quest for solutions were used to draw up a new corporate culture based on quality management. The goal was stated thus: "*To achieve first-class results through the Quality Network*".

As we have seen, in 1992 Management was optimistic about the chances of taking on the Japanese car industry and winning. At this point, one might ask whether the affective discourse was part of a plan to hoodwink the workers, or if instead Management genuinely believed that it was taking the right steps. Bearing in mind the highly persuasive performance Management put in during the early stages of the

negotiation, it is hard to believe the discourse was nothing more than hot air. Management acted along the same lines in the 1996 round of collective negotiations, albeit with much less gung-ho. Here, the stress was not only on constant improvement — “the quality of the product” — but also on “cost containment”: “Everyone must avoid doing anything that might harm the Company’s competitiveness, which is the only guarantor of the future” (1996). One can thus see a change in Management’s affective approach, involving a shift from *pride* in 1992 to *responsible fear* in 1996 that called for a more cautious strategy.

The 1996 Management discourse made it clear that it was no longer a question of winning or losing the battle against the Japanese. Instead, Management chose to blame the Works Council and its members, letting workers glimpse the dire consequences of overstepping ‘the red lines’ imposed by the broader business setting. Put baldly, if workers chose to go ignore those limits, they would throw away all the effort made by the Company so far to become more competitive. The Company stressed that following Management’s proposals was “*the only way to ensure the future*”. The discourse effectively argued that workers were duty-bound to follow the Company’s strategy. Put another way, in 1992 Management focused on what should be done. In 1996 Management spelt out what should not be done.

In the negotiation of the 2001 collective agreement, *knowledge and duty* were linked to a single pragmatic semantic operator (the word *seriously*), providing an indicator of emotional attitude. By resorting to this word, Management both sought to make the *seriousness* of the situation plain and to underline workers’ duty to accept the guidelines already in force at other Company plants. The message was that there was no ‘wiggle room’, with Management noting a forthcoming “... *announcement of the restructuring of its operations in Europe*”. These restructuring measures included cutting production capacity, hiring fewer workers, and slashing jobs and overtime. The dawn of the 21st Century marked a new business context and approach to affective management.

AFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE WORKS COUNCIL: SUCCUMBING TO OR RESISTING RISK?

Contrary to what one might have expected, the Works Council did not respond in kind to Management’s discourse. Instead, in these early stages of the negotiation, the Works Committee focused more on marshalling protest. That is why few inferences on emotional states can be drawn from the statements made by the Works Committee.

Here, the Work Committee’s lack of interest in Management’s analysis of the broader business setting was apparent in the former’s stock response: “*On Thursday Management will give information on how the Company is faring. Negotiations will begin in earnest once these details have been provided*” (1996); “*As usual, the next meeting will begin with a presentation of how Management sees the Company’s present and future*” (2001). Notwithstanding this attitude, we still need to reflect on some subjective considerations arising in this regard.

The lack of affective content in the 1992 agreement is especially significant given the highly affective-based approach taken by Management. This confirms the idea that a great affective display by one of the parties does not necessarily elicit a similar display by the other party. Specifically, the Works Committee gave its members a dry summary of Management’s proposals for introducing a new paradigm for running the plant. The lack of emotional reaction to such a watershed moment makes one ask how far the Works Council was willing to fight such plans, and indeed whether it was complicit in them.

A first working hypothesis is that the Works Council was simply unaware of the depth of the changes afoot. Yet the fact is that the unions decided in 1992 to take on advisors and experts covering “*specific issues*” in relation the change in production methods and organisation. This suggests that while the Works Council had some inkling of the changes taking place, it was too slow on the uptake in grasping what these meant for future labour relations.

In addition, Management's arguments were highly persuasive given its clever resort to symbolism and its skilful explanatory discourse. This let Management appropriate the role of expert, giving it even greater power. The clearly asymmetric expert-layman relationship (with Management cast in the role of the former and the Works Committee in the latter) helped undermine Labour's ability to express opposition.

An indication of the Work Committee's weak evaluation skills is the literalness with which it conveyed Management's idea that *"continuous improvement should not mean working more but better"* (1992). Merely parroting the statement without critically challenging it suggest how far Management ideas had spread both within the Works Committee and the workforce, with both of the latter taking the values and organisational schemes proposed by the Company at face value. In 1992, Management was not only wholly convinced it was making the right proposals but also that the Works Committee would take up the discourse as its own.

During the 1996 negotiations, the Works Committee angrily reacted to some of Management's exhortations that workers should not do anything that might harm the Company's competitiveness. Yet this hostility did not involve questioning either the system or the corporate strategy that set the plant's workers against those at other Company factories following implementation of 'internal globalisation' plans. Instead, the reaction was sparked by the perceived Management slight to workers in GM España's plants. The Works Committee's reaction showed this was a sore point: *"... After 12 years in operation, Opel España continues to be the GM company with the largest production in the world, staying first in both efficiency and profitability terms, surpassing even the newly-built plants"* (1996). This bears out the earlier hypothesis. The internal competition fostered by the Company was not defined by the Works Committee in terms of greed or exploitation. Instead, the criticism was limited to Management's lack of trust in the work force, failure to acknowledge workers' efforts, and distrust of workers' ability to meet Company standards.

What the Works Committee wanted was respect from Management but in demanding this, it showed agreement with Management's values and interests: *"The way the factory works is very important to us and will be so in the future"* (emphasis mine). In its defence, the Works Committee ended up blaming Management on the same grounds as the Company, namely efficacy: *"Even so, we have made it clear that the same happens in all companies. If there is inefficiency in the industrial process, only 20% of the problem can be laid at workers' door — the remaining 80% is Management's fault"*.

In the 2001 agreement, the Works Council chose another strategy, making up for its lack of appeal to emotions by disputing Management's argument that the Company was going through a crisis (the firm booked a loss for the Financial Year): *"We will not negotiate against the background of an imaginary crisis"*. Oddly enough, it was within the framework of objectivity and affective neutrality that the Committee reacted most vehemently in opposing Management, going so far as to question whether the latter was acting in good faith. Although emotions were not expressed, that does not mean they were not felt.

CONCLUSIONS

The first thing that one should highlight is the function of collective bargaining itself. It came into being under the Fordist model of labour relations and was shaped by its theoretical and practical assumptions, which nevertheless were later harnessed to draw up the new model.

From the protagonists' analysis of the business setting, one can draw the following conclusions.

Based on the affective patterns created throughout the decade, Management played a highly active role while the Works Committee played a relatively passive one. The emotions deployed by Management in the pursuit of its aims were: admiration, gratitude, fear, compassion, pride, trust, optimism, threat, concern, and suffering.

That said, the resort to emotions was unevenly spread throughout the decade. The use made of emotions in the negotiation of the 1992 collective agreement coincided with Management's wish to drive through major changes in the company's production and organisational systems. The appeal made to emotions slowly waned thereafter.

Management's basic affective scheme involved inducing both fear and hope in a discourse typical of the language of risks, which is to say that of 'being' at risk and that of 'avoiding' risk. The affective discourse followed the 'being' paradigm of risk in defining a turbulent, hostile environment but showed some flexibility, especially in relation to 'probable' risk as opposed to 'true' risk. The discourse stressed 'risk avoidance' but put less emphasis on emotions, taking a more indirect approach.

The analysis of these affective dynamics reveals a society that is both reflective and that involves risks. At the beginning of the decade, this affective approach was based on a *virtual reality* in which di-

vining risk was no bar to taking a positive view. By contrast, the risks had become all too clear by the end of the decade.

The evidence also points to a clear consolidation of the organisational ideology enshrined in the *New Management* discourse and in plans for Human Resources. The management literature spawned by the great gurus in response to a crisis-ridden Fordist production system strongly coloured Management's whole affective discourse.

With regard to proposals for future research, the rift between the affective strategies developed at the beginning of one decade and the next is fertile ground for further analysis. Such studies would allow a more accurate comparison of affective deployment during paradigm shifts and their consolidation. It would also be interesting to see whether the dynamics established between the actors in our case are also found in areas other than labour relations, especially in settings involving high uncertainty and asymmetric power structures.

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