

Laughter, fado, and dance: employability and emotional management in Randstad Portugal's Facebook page

Risa, fado y danza: empleabilidad y manejo de emociones en la página de Facebook de Randstad de Portugal

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ABSTRACT¹

The new forms of production require an increasing mobilization of the worker. From the way the worker presents himself, to his relationship with his colleagues and superiors, this effort requires a vast set of individual traits, among which the workers' own emotional behaviour. The goal of this investigation is to understand what leads human resources management to wish to intervene in this area, by trying to identify the framework underpinning workers' conduct. With this goal in mind, we will carry out a critical analysis of a set of press articles and videos posted on Randstad Portugal's Facebook page inspired by the theoretical grid of *Critical Management Studies*. The article starts by examining a few concepts proposed in this Facebook page, like *emotional intelligence*, as well as a few socio-managerial practices presented as recipes for increasing productivity. It then focuses on the limits imposed on the sociability originated by these very practices, meant to avoid the excesses that divert them from their managerial prerogatives. Finally, through the description of a dance choreography, the article analyses how the expression of emotions is subject to a repertoire whose coordination lines reflect the organization of the company.

Keywords: work, human resources management, emotional intelligence, stress.

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RESUMEN

Las nuevas formas de producción requieren una movilización creciente de los trabajadores. Por la forma en que el trabajador se presenta a sí mismo, a su relación con sus compañeros y superiores, este esfuerzo requiere un vasto conjunto de rasgos individuales, entre las que se cuenta el comportamiento emocional de los trabajadores. El objetivo de esta investigación es comprender lo que lleva la gestión de los recursos humanos intervenir en esta área, al tratar de identificar lo modelo de orientación de la conducta de los trabajadores. Con este objetivo en mente, se llevará a cabo un análisis crítico, inspirado en la red teórica de Estudios de Gestión Críticos, de una serie de artículos de prensa y videos publicados en la página de Facebook de Randstad Portugal. El artículo examina algunos conceptos propuestos en esta página de Facebook, como la inteligencia emocional, así como algunas prácticas socio-administrativas presentadas como recetas para aumentar la productividad. Luego, se centra en los límites impuestos a la sociabilidad originado por estas mismas prácticas, con la intención de evitar los excesos que ellos desvían de sus prerrogativas de gestión. Por último, a través de la descripción de una coreografía de danza, el artículo analiza cómo la expresión de las emociones está sujeta a un repertorio cuyas líneas de coordinación reflejan la organización de la empresa.

Palabras clave: Trabajo, Gestión de Recursos Humanos, Inteligencia Emocional, Estrés.

INTRODUCTION

Work currently involves dimensions of life that until very recently were seen as belonging to a private sphere. Considering work from the viewpoint of its formal elements, generally defined in the labour contract (working hours, the job description or the space itself) is, in this sense, restrictive, and fails to convey a series of forms of regulation that extend much beyond the legal sphere. Drawing on a case study whose corpus of analysis encompasses a series of articles and videos posted on Randstad Portugal's Facebook page, this article tries to understand, on the one hand, the main lines guiding workers' emotional behaviour and, on the other hand, the economic motivation for including emotions in the productive sphere.

While this phenomenon strengthened in the last decades, C. Wright Mills had already identified how emotions were taken into consideration in an eminently economic rationale. In his view, figures like the bureaucrat demonstrated how the market did not merely establish the value of tangible objects, but also dedicated to the business of personality. He "not only sells his time and energy, he also sells himself" (Mills, 1965: 146). In that market, Mills continues, human expressions no longer reveal private aspirations. All character features, especially familiar ones – delicate gestures, tact, courtesy, smiles – have become expressions of the aspirations of the company (idem: 147). Subsequently, in her studies about the emotional labour of airline hostesses, sociologist Arlie Hochschild will note the strategic relevance of recruitment, selection and evaluation procedures. Career guides suggested smiles and liveliness, evocative of what constituted their main task – delivering commercial love –, an expression coined by Hochschild herself (1993). The job interview and, later, constant evaluations, ensured that *being* hostess: delicate, kind, and, at the same time, knowledgeable of the right way to deal with the client's stress, impatience, and even rudeness.

The rise of jobs in the services sector – where the matter, not the person, is subject to transformation – contributes to the expansion of this market segment. While in the past managing emotions was a criteria required only in a few job posts, mostly skilled ones, today this skill must be part of the repertoire of most of the labour force, whether in shopping centres (Cruz, 2004, 2010) or call-centres (Venco, 2006). In the latter, rather than the readiness with which a client is attended to, what is more important is how he is attended to. These requirements are however, not considered exclusive to the act of assisting the client, but are an essential element of the relationship with the colleague and/or the manager².

The alleged opportunity to eventually develop these personal skills reveals the growing dissociation between work and the remaining spheres of life, where the former is considered, in the words of the historian Jacques Donzelot, as a "good in itself: a means for self-fulfilment, rather than an opportunity for transcendence" (Donzelot, 1991: 251). In contrast to protestant asceticism, the individual begins to enjoy an unprecedented autonomy. This attitude does not, however, stem from amorality, but rather from a new work ethics. The research carried out not only by Donzelot (1991) but also by Michel Foucault (2004) and, more

² This reminds us the concept of *servicialization* proposed by authors like Philippe Zarifian and Jean Gadrey, according to which work, regardless of its sector of activity, always implies the creation of a service. Even within the company, the colleague must be dealt with like the client, by trying to ensure his satisfaction (Zarifian, Gadrey 2002).

recently, by Heelas (2002), Boltanski and Chiapello (2007), Rose and Miller (2009), and Dardot and Laval (2009, 2010), among others, highlights how expression, pleasure, and even hedonism, become fundamental features of the new relationship between the company and the worker. The meaning given to work extends beyond an authoritarian logic (from God), legal-formal (from the bureaucracy) or utilitarian (the balance between costs and benefits), and becomes associated with “the opportunity to ‘work` on one-self; to grow; to learn (‘the learning organization`); to become more effective as a person” (Heelas, 2002: 83). Work thus becomes indistinguishable from life, resembling an attitude, a way of life, a model of existence. In this sense, according to Foucault “it is not a like other capitals. Ability to work, skill, the ability to do something cannot be separated from the person who is skilled and who can do this particular thing” (Foucault, 2004: 230).

Extolling an entrepreneurial attitude vis-à-vis oneself, the company and society itself take on an all different dimension from the moment the job’s typical stability and security, the basis of fordist citizenship, come second to the accountability for results achieved, be they positive or negative. The multiplication of investment possibilities would not make any sense if, in the end, the investor could not reap his benefits. The “liberation” of the social field formerly occupied by the State thus entails a deeper dimension. As a form of *governmentability*, neoliberalism tries to live up to the art of governing as little as possible, asserting the autonomy of a “civil society” that, in its diverse components, will share the same “intelligibility grid to give to the behaviour of a new individual” (idem: 258), which, in turn, will be used as a reference for the State itself³. For Peter Drucker, guru and manager, rather than companies, the goal is to create a *management society* “where innovation and managerial activity are normal, constant and continuous” (Drucker, 1987: 265). The secret, according to Rose and Miller, is to elevate the norms of that *grid of intelligibility* to moral values, and then to let them work as “part of the ‘self-steering mechanisms` of individuals” (Rose and Miller, 2009: 42). *Employability*, as will be analysed below, thus involves proposing a series of mechanisms to advise and develop workers. Though frequently armed with a strong moral nature, adhesion to this type of *mechanisms* and *grids* depends on the individual’s own initiative. Free choice however implies accountability for the results achieved regardless of any other circumstances, constraints or structural difficulties. Both with regards to the relationship between the individual and the client and between the individual and the company, the worker is invited to develop a production of himself on his own, but not according to himself and not necessarily for himself.

METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

In order to identify the aspects of this new relationship between the individual and work, we will carry out, as mentioned above, a case study whose corpus of analysis is composed of a series of articles and videos published on Randstad Portugal’s Facebook page. The result of

³ For a critique of this idea, see Wacquant (2012).

a merger process started in 2008 with the buying of former Select-Vedior⁴, Randstad Portugal group has focused its activity on providing temporary work⁵, consulting services (*in-house services*)⁶, and also outsourcing solutions, particularly at the level of call-centres. This versatility partly reflects in the use of social networks (in this case Facebook) as a business communication strategy⁷. Indeed, the Internet revolutionised the methods of dissemination of job announcements and, along with these, recruitment procedures themselves. The changes operated in the world of work, particularly the growth of workers' qualifications and skills and the *flexibilization* of contractual relations, led to the emergence of new services like thematic sites made available by mass media (for instance *I* newspaper's *Isabe*) or job portals — *Sapoemprego* or *Expressoemprego*. Under the form of “guides” or “tips”, the articles directly speak to the candidate and/or worker through a self-evident and neutral discourse, which, however, as we intend to demonstrate, is shaped by economic goals. In this way, our investigation engages with the agenda set by *Critical Management Studies*: the development of a non-objectivist and non-naturalist perspective of management, the analysis of power relations in the company and in society, or the critical approach to “taken-for-granted assumptions and ideologies that freeze the contemporary social order” (Alvesson, Willmott, 1992: 13). In this context, discourse takes on a strategic importance, performing a constitutive rather than representational role, in other words, aiming to produce what is the subject of analysis⁸.

In our study we chose a methodology of discourse analysis that instead of considering the text and/or the image⁹ in an isolated way, aims to identify the features present across the several discourses or, according to the definition of archaeological research proposed by Foucault, the “types of rules for discursive practices that run through individual *oeuvres*, sometimes govern them entirely, and dominate them to such an extent that nothing eludes them” (Foucault, 2005: 185).

⁴ The market share then absorbed led the European Commission to comment on the deal, making its approval depend on the sale of national operations held by the Dutch multinational Randstad, then purchased by the US company Kelly Services, and the postponing (for a two-year period) of the adoption of a new brand. It was, therefore, only in 2010 that former Select and Vedior actually started presenting themselves as Tempo-Team and Randstad, respectively. Recently the group decided to merge its action through the exclusive use of the brand *Randstad*. The group also included *Psicoforma*, a historic company in the HR area in Portugal.

⁵ According to information available on Randstad's website, its areas of activity include, among others, administration, hotel services, the automobile sector, call-centres, aviation and tourism, banking, and insurances.

⁶ Analysis of the HR policies developed by the company and counselling about the planning process and work methods.

⁷ Besides being free, based upon the intersection of *apparatus* — from video to text — and providing access to an all array of discursive genres, it is the *apparatus* itself, used among “friends” and “fans” that helps in the creation of an “attentive symbolic environment for organizational action” (Lyytinen, 1992: 161).

⁸ We do not mean, however, to reduce the social entirely to discourse. The former, in fact, always acts in interrelation with other types of non-discursive practices. According to Luis Enrique Alonso, “discourses are not merely words, they are also ways of social practice that point to political struggles and hierarchies, pragmatic contexts, institutional niches, material conditions, and non-discursive practices in a strict sense [...]. As a result, society encompasses limits to the possibility of discourses and limits to their interpretation — historical, political, economic, situational, etc. (Alonso, 2012: 17).

⁹ Like the analysis of written discourse, that of videos posted on Youtube will tend to emphasize its social component, in particular the forms and contents of demonstration, classification, and designation.

The inability to manage an individual without knowing him in his different dimensions (*power without knowledge*) led to the development of a series of *mechanisms* like studies, reports or data collection strategies. The categories under which these pragmatic calculations are carried out are far from neutral, though often they claim to have the status of truth. What Foucault describes as *assujettissement* constitutes precisely this form of power “which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him” (Foucault, 1984: 302). Discourse thus contains a power of performativity, which, in this case, under the form of advice, practical manuals, and “tips”, aims to make its categories materially consequent¹⁰. The relationship between the subject, truth and instituted power finds its final form in the subject himself, in other words, when the latter addresses himself as an object of truth, *taking care of himself* and facing that action as an ethic postulate¹¹. Power works in two ways through discourse, as summarized by Barbara Townley: firstly, it turns the worker into a subject of knowledge and categorization, and, later, confronts him with an ideal-type, the reference from which he should, by his own initiative, “modify or change their behaviour” (Townley, 1998: 199). If discourse is recognised as a technology of power, then it becomes possible to make Facebook into a space of observation — without, however, actively participating in it, as a *lurker* (Hine, 2000) — and analysis.

EMOTION AGAINST STRESS

The increasing lack of distinction between work and life reflects, as we argued above, in the categorization and significance given to emotions, a sign of a specific type of intelligence to be developed by the worker, and, thus, a sign of greater *employability*. Resulting from the works by psychologist Daniel Goleman, this thesis will be widely disseminated in Randstad Portugal’s Facebook page, namely through an article written by that author. Instead of binding emotion to a destabilizing tendency, opposed to reason, the psychologist argues that emotion and reason go hand in hand, and that feeling has “a crucial role in navigating through the decisions that we have to take” (Goleman, 1997, *online*)¹².

The concept of *emotional intelligence* thus refers to the ability to manage emotions rather than to suppress them. The secret lies in self-conscience, i.e. “recognizing a feeling while it happens” (*idem*) and, depending on the result, in controlling it. Feelings like anger

¹⁰ The notion of *performativity* in language was originally developed by Austin. According to Austin, the performative forms the act itself, its efficiency depending on *existing conditions of happiness*, from the context in which it takes place to the tone adopted in its intonation. Authors like Bourdieu (1998) or Benveniste (1992) criticised the lack of attention of powers and capitals in his analysis. While the ability to speak is universal, the ability to be heard — or rather for the sense of what is spoken to be socially recognised — is far from being so.

¹¹ Foucault starts *The Care of the Self*, volume III of his *History of Sexuality*, by mentioning that while his original object of analysis (Artemidoro’s Interpretation of Dreams) does not produce “moral judgements in a direct and explicit way”, it supposes “generally accepted schemes of appreciation” (Foucault, 1994: 9). The latter, as he will describe throughout the work, encompass “the form of an attitude, of a way of behaving” (*idem*, 55).

¹² Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 10.05.11.

and anxiety, for example, can be mitigated by “undermining unreal assumptions that feed anger, being sceptical about the doubts that cause anxiety or exercising, playing games, etc., or planning a small triumph, which help to remove melancholy” (*idem*). In turn, motivation is linked to “the idea of self-efficiency, the belief that one dominates the events taking place in one’s life and that one is able to win challenges” (*idem*), and thus needs to be stimulated.

Working on emotions, making them intelligent, is not just an individual task, to be fulfilled alone. Other people’s emotions can also be subject to that same process, a task fulfilled more efficiently by people with empathy and a high degree of self-control, typical of “professions that involve contact and negotiations with other people, like management, for instance” (*idem*). The key idea, then, is that intelligent emotion, instead of being repressed, is the product of self-conscience and self-control, skills that can help others reach a similar condition. Boosting the worker’s *emotional intelligence* thus requires the company to equip itself with elements that are at the same time motivating and mitigating.

Stress, for instance, emerges as one of the key concerns mentioned in the articles under analysis. Related to symptoms of “loss of emotional control” and factors like “work accumulation” or “personal problems” (Isabe, undated (a): *online*)¹³, stress tends to be categorised as a chronic disease, susceptible to management by the company. According to the sociologist Tim Newton, the latter can directly intervene through three *apparatus*: assistance programs, generally ensured by counselling services; courses and/or workshops (for instance meditation and relaxation); and the structural redefinition of the job functions or even of the organization itself (Newton, 1995: 98). The information gathered in this study includes a few accounts of management experiences based on the second method, though these *apparatus* are non-exclusive and the employer can choose to invest in the inter-relation of the three.

Resorting to humour is probably one of the technologies mentioned the most, as it helps “people to deal better with the often stressful eight-hour workday. People do not need to be permanently positive, but companies must help them improve their humour by creating a more positive environment” (Pioneiro, 2011: *online*)¹⁴. The feeling described by Marcelo Pinto, founder of the São Paulo Laugh Club (*Clube da Gargalhada de São Paulo*) and an expert certified by the Portuguese School of Laughter (*Escola de Riso de Portugal*), is related to the increase in the “quality of life of employees and, as a consequence, their productivity”, the reduction of the “workers’ absenteeism and their illness” and the improvement of “communication between superiors and subordinates” (*idem*). Fostering the participation of workers through ideas and suggestions discussed collectively is not compatible with a closed and sombre environment. A climate of pleasant disposition could work as a kind of palliative for work effort, contributing to improved relaxation “with all the features of all together-now” (Holes, Marra, 2002: 1689). In turn, as Marcelo Pinto highlights, this requires organised activities that can live up to its relevance:

¹³ Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 13.05.11.

¹⁴ Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 05.04.11.

“Before the beginning of the workday, a forced laughter session can be organised for up to five minutes. Like aerobics, it warms up and awakens workers. A PowerPoint with funny pictures can also be shown to draw the participants’ attention. Furthermore, in some companies, it is possible to create a comfortable space for employees to relax” (apud Pioneiro, 2011, *online*).

Current work and living conditions can, however, point in the exact opposite direction. Given the constraints caused by the present-day world economic crisis, some groups and organizations, like *Caixa Geral de Depósitos*, *Novartis* and *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*, found an answer in the organization of *fado* workshops. For if “*fado* is the music that sings the destiny of the Portuguese, the crisis also seems to be our fortune [*fado*]. Resorting to *fado* is the best solution to solve the crisis. Did you understand?” (Costa, *undated*, *online*)¹⁵. Split into several groups, workers are invited to “write a four-line verse about what distresses them at work”. On the other side, superiors follow the same method, in a sort of singing challenge where, according to HR consultant Isabel Salema, “People finally open their hearts. Without insulting or hurting each other” (*apud* Costa, *undated: online*)¹⁶. Positive action over a more stressful environment is presented also as means to develop new skills, particularly with respect to “the fear of public exposure” and “stage techniques” (*idem*). Ultimately, regardless of the importance of the action within the team, change depends on the worker and on the boosting of skills.

The logic of the “tip” continues to prevail in most articles, where stress is pictured as a merely individual problem and, thus, predisposed to an equally individual resolution. Once the period of reflection is completed, like in other procedures discussed above, the reader is advised to follow a series of *cares*, which extend beyond the job itself — regular pauses, tidiness of the space, or the way to handle the client. The answer to ambiguous emotional borders must have equally ambiguous spatial and temporal perimeters, extending to the worker’s lifestyle.

The care of the self... and of others

The way the worker’s health is taken into consideration in the assessment of productivity can be seen in the promotion of good sporting practices — in the gym or through activities like “walking, domestic labour, dancing, among others” — and of a healthy diet, with “balanced meals and the exclusion of foods that are too ‘heavy’ like sausages, fried food or similar foods” (Sapoemprego, *undated (a): online*)¹⁷. A particular attention is devoted to breakfast, since

¹⁵ Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 07.06.11.

¹⁶ The content of the lyrics will depend on the degree of freedom of the group in question, and there are “examples in which specific and concrete problems are mentioned, without mincing words [...]. ‘Like collaborators complaining that they do not feel comfortable being screamed at in front of clients’” (Costa, *undated, online*).

¹⁷ Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 17.08.11.

“Someone who takes a fuller breakfast has a more positive attitude to the workday. On the contrary, when breakfast is deficient, concentration and performance at work are compromised. This aspect takes on a particular relevance in studies conducted with students during exams, whose average results were lower whenever they skipped the first morning meal” (Sapoemprego, undated (b), *online*)¹⁸.

Furthermore, a disorderly life, alcohol and smoking, which have “harmful” effects and do not help the worker to fight stress, even if apparently they “calm him” (Sapoemprego, undated (a), *online*), are discouraged, and should be replaced by tea, orange juice and a good night’s sleep.

Often companies themselves motivate this type of practices, and allow them to take place within the workspace during the workday. When moments of tension occur, the use of relaxation techniques or listening to comforting music¹⁹, for example, can foster a “Zen attitude at work” (Isabe, undated (b), *online*)²⁰. In some cases, the creation of a warmer environment could even include the presence of pets (Cerqueira, undated, *online*)²¹ or romantic relationships between colleagues. In spite of the serious consequences of a possible breakup, “no company can avoid two colleagues from falling in love”. It is therefore “better to take advantage of the fact of having one’s other half close by and to feel motivated at work” (Agência Financeira, 2012, *online*)²².

Some management will however always need to be ensured so that, instead of intimacy, one can speak of levels of sociability. No matter how close some relationships may be, a certain number of topics should not be discussed at work. Revealing one’s personal life, for instance, could breach the tolerance limits of the listener, who may not have “the time nor the patience to listen to the complaints of the colleague next door — after all, we all have our own problems” (Isabe, undated (c): *online*)²³. Money is subject to similar reservations, given the danger represented by comments and considerations surrounding one’s salary, which could lead one’s co-worker to “feel in two possible ways: that he is treated unfairly or that he is superior” (*idem*). Finally, the balance and maintenance of a team spirit supposes avoiding divisive themes like religion and politics, since “no one likes to hear that his belief or party are a farce, and much less to feel that one is being pushed towards a certain faith or certain political principles” (*idem*)²⁴.

¹⁸ Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 11.10.08.

¹⁹ Using speakers, unless the music is listened to in a social area, and avoiding “the more recent hits of the dance floors or beats that are too strong, which are more distracting and remove that relaxing and stress-avoiding effect that music can have in listeners”. Alternatively, “sounds of the sea, Gregorian chant or even the famous versions played in “pan pipe” flutes”. Jazz, blues or classical music are other viable options (SapoEmprego, undated (c): *online*). Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 26.10.11.

²⁰ Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 16.06.11.

²¹ According to the journalist Marta Cerqueira, several studies suggest the relation between the presence of pets and a “rise in self-esteem”. Inspired by experiences made in the US, conducted by one in five companies, some Portuguese sister companies have organised a “week dedicated to dogs”. Collaborators were very happy to bring their pets to the office” (Cerqueira, undated: *online*). Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 21.02.11.

²² Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 21.02.11.

²³ Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 14.04.11.

²⁴ This is so, in spite of the frequent comments like the following, issued by Randstad itself: “The agreement between the government and the Troika reflects an adequate balance between the actions needed to restore market trust and to ensure that this adjustment does not excessively hinder the development of the economy and jobs. Check

These recommendations must encompass all the areas the worker is exposed to, both at a personal and virtual level. João Silva Martins, general director of *Randstad Technologies*, argues that social networks create a shared space “where our image and our voice is seen and heard in the first person and as richly and quickly as possible” (Martins, 2011: 24)²⁵. However, there are limits to consider, preventing

“The mistake of liberalising without any type of rules the use of social networks inside organisations as well as access to the web, as that would be promoting anarchy and creating opportunities for situations, of which there are plenty of examples, of collaborators who express themselves on the internet in a very unprofessional and even unethical way. In very different parts of the world serious cases have been recorded where the use of social networks at work actually led to the filing of disciplinary proceedings resulting in dismissals under fair grounds. It is not necessary to block access, but rather to regulate and monitor the use of social networks. Several specialists believe that the moderate use of social networks in the work environment increases productivity” (*idem*, 27).

The manager even defends a code of conduct where the *collaborator* is told how he “should present the company to the world, the type of acceptable behaviour as a professional, how to act in case of positive and negative comments, thus trying to maximise the profitability of the potential represented by social networks if adequately used” (*idem*, 27).

In the case of Facebook, advice on how it should be used implies beginning by not giving an honest answer to the question ‘What’s on your mind’: “The question behind the posts on the wall should not be taken literally, and complaining about your company is unthinkable. Think before you write. And be careful with language. It is best not to intervene in this section in the first minutes after twelve hours of work” (Isabe, undated (d): *online*)²⁶. Publicly disclosing the collaborator’s set of personal interests, particularly when this “suggests behaviours that you will not want to see associated to you”, or reveals moments of intimacy with friends and family, means “clashing with professional conduct” (*idem*). In order to avoid this, according to the list of recommendations, the settings tab must be used, the profile information carefully reviewed, and ‘friendships` strategically managed:

“Do not send friendship invitations to half the office in the first day of work. Friendship, even if virtual, supposes more than sharing the same source of revenue. Wait for others to add you, and understand little by little how the company’s hierarchy enters this new universe. A work colleague sends you an unwanted invitation? Refusing it abruptly may also not be the best option. Send a LinkedIn invitation, a site exclusively for professional relations, and wait for the other person to forget the matter. If that does not happen, you will better have an excuse ready: ‘I don’t pay much attention to Facebook` — is information that can easily be proved” (*idem*).

for more information here!”. Comment posted on 4 May 2010, followed by news from the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* (04.04.11) about the terms of the agreement between the government and the Troika.

²⁵ Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 21.11.11.

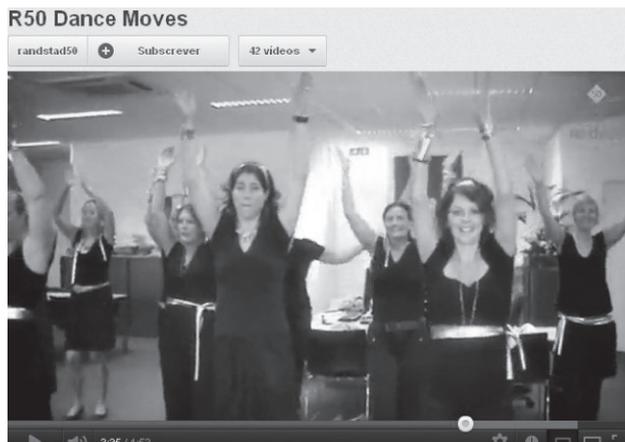
²⁶ Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 22.02.11.

The dominant perception, then, is that any type of excess must be avoided, even of allegedly positive characteristics like kindness and ‘proactiveness’. Though unintentionally, a permanent smile and endless availability can, according to career consultant Karla Oliveira, “pass on an image of falseness” (*apud* Infomoney, 2011: *online*)²⁷, thus feeding distrust.

Dancing in the workplace

The careful definition and coherent separation of notions of intimacy and closeness is visible in the choreography of the *R50 dance moves* dance, commemorative of Randstad’s 50 years and baptised with the company’s name. The music chosen is Black Eyes Peas’ *I’ve got a feeling*, the first song ever to reach more than 7 million digital sales in the USA²⁸. In the video edited by Randstad, a professional instructor teaches the choreography’s eight steps, a series of easy to follow coordinated movements²⁹. Later these would be put in practice on 2 July, on the group’s anniversary, according to the footage disseminated by the company. In Randstad’s agencies, several groups, mostly composed of women, follow the instructions they were given, apparently in a pleasant and convivial atmosphere.

IMAGE 1
R50 DANCE MOVES



Source: Randstad (2010). Image captured on 30.10.12

At first sight, this initiative may only be a sign of the worker’s freedom and creativity, as he is allowed to jump, laugh, and dance. A closer look, however, allows us to recognise

²⁷ Article linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 20.06.11.

²⁸ The lyrics invite to fun and hedonism: *I feel stressed out, I wanna let it go, Let’s go way out spaced out And losing all control’*.

²⁹ Video linked in Randstad’s Facebook page on 12.02.11.

an exact coordination, frequently ensured by one or several members. Improvisation is rare and when it does happen it takes place collectively or once the choreography is over. While on the one hand, we are undoubtedly faced with a team effort, on the other hand, the prearranged choreography cannot but remind us of Ford's assembly line. Like the industrial proletarian, the worker dances next to his colleagues but without any physical contact (for instance in a circle or with a pair), following a pre-determined rhythm and form (see Image 1).

The alliance between supposedly opposing features is not specific to this situation. Being able to laugh freely or even dance next to a manager fosters an atmosphere of proximity that conceals the figure of authority, though this is still exercised. Like a ritual or a ceremonial, for example the breakfast at the advertisement agency Spiro and Associates analysed by Anthony Rosen, Randstad's dance choreography suggests the transformation of social productive relations into "relations of communion and amity" (Rosen, 1985: 33). This type of mechanism, legitimised by the idea that working is first of all participating in the fulfilment of a mission (not just a work contract), may help to prevent conflict: indeed, it is hard to demand, complain, deny, or attack someone with whom one mingled at the company's Christmas party or at the *team-building* initiative. Distending the ruling form of authority sometimes corresponds to the art of a more efficient exercise of that same authority.

CONCLUSION

The readings suggested by Randstad Portugal's Facebook page reflect, as we noted, the concern with stress, tiredness and other emotional problems that can put the worker's well-being at stake. Resorting to an informal language, aimed at a 'you' and about an 'us'; repeating the main ideas; mentioning examples, in particular examples of excellence; making assessments from tests and evaluations; and giving the reader (with the exclusive help of friends and/or mentors) the ability to change his life, contribute to the fact that, in relatively small articles, a diagnosis is proposed and a recipe suggested. In this case, as argued by Tim Newson, the void left by medicine allows for the establishment of a "pernicious disease whose only symptom may be loss of productivity and profits for the company" (Newton, 1995: 107).

That work is damaging to health is not exactly news. However, the use of cognitive elements in the productive process means that the burnout is not primarily physical. The demands involved in work challenge the human ability to absorb a vast amount of information. The result, according to Franco Berardi, is that of

"A pathological effect in the individual human mind [...]. Individuals are not in a position to consciously take on the immense and growing mass of information that enters their computers, their cell phones, their TV screens, their electronic agendas and their minds. [...] It seems as though it is mandatory to follow, to know, to value, to assimilate, and to take on all this information if one wants to be efficient, competitive, successful" (Berardi, 2003: 22).

The outcome of a structure, not a conjuncture, stress has a dual epidemic nature, as it is widespread among a vast multitude of people, and chronic, since one can hardly escape its cause. In this sense, then, it is a disease that needs to be managed, but not cured.

In the past, to evoke the association noted by Gramsci, the scientific work model and the accessory need for adequate subjectivities involved a battle against so-called 'irrational' behaviours, in "an uninterrupted struggle, often painful and bloody process of subjugating natural (i. e. animal and primitive) instincts to new, more complex and rigid norms and habits of order, exactitude and precision" (Gramsci, 2009: 286). Prohibition and progress in hygiene³⁰ thus came to answer "the need to elaborate a new type of man suited to the new type of work and productive process" (*idem*, 279).

The evolution in the ways of working led to a change of the object and the form of treatment. From physical, *hygienism* became mental, less concerned with the individual's relationship with his body than with his relationship with his fears and ambitions, with his peers and his private life (Rose, Miller, 2009: 44): hence, less based on ergonomics and more on psychology. The *apparatus* at the service of this endeavour in turn become less inquisitorial and more based on the logic of counselling, which invites "individuals to 'see' a certain view of themselves" (Newton, 1995: 117). The ideal-type to follow, according to Boltanski and Chiappello (2007), is discernible by personality features: enthusiasm, versatility, involvement, flexibility, adaptability, autonomy, tolerance, and communication. On the contrary, the anti-hero of this *new spirit of capitalism* is an individual unable to adapt, authoritarian, inflexible and intolerant. He is constantly in a defence position, and never demonstrates boldness or the ability to trust and to inspire trust. Those who fall or let themselves stay in this category "resemble all the 'office-miseries, the sullen types, the individualists who withdraw to themselves, never go out, don't participate in the end-of-year drinks, shun cocktails, return to hotel pronto, and plant themselves in front of the tele" (*idem*, 119). Calling on dance and laughter reflects a new form of social relation that moves away from the now dated model of bureaucratic management, headed by the outcasts evoked by Boltanski and Chiapello. However, both the limits inherent to the dance choreography itself, and other types of restrictions recommended on the Facebook page (regarding the topics of conversation or the comments about the company to be posted on social networks, for example) are signs of the "seductive and strictly rhetorical face of the new models of power" (Dardot, Laval, 2009, 2010: 411). In this sense, this discursive and epistemological framework, which defines what is and is not normal for one to feel and do, does not imply, as Dardot and Laval conclude, the pure and simple freeing from the iron cage conceived by Max Weber. Instead, "each one is impelled to build, on his own, his individual 'iron cage' (*idem*: 411, 412).

³⁰ According to Gramsci, this proselitism was preceded by the investigation of the practices of the working classes through "enquiries conducted by the industrialists into the workers' private lives" or "inspection services created by some firms to control the 'morality' of their workers" (Gramsci, 1999: 289, 290).

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