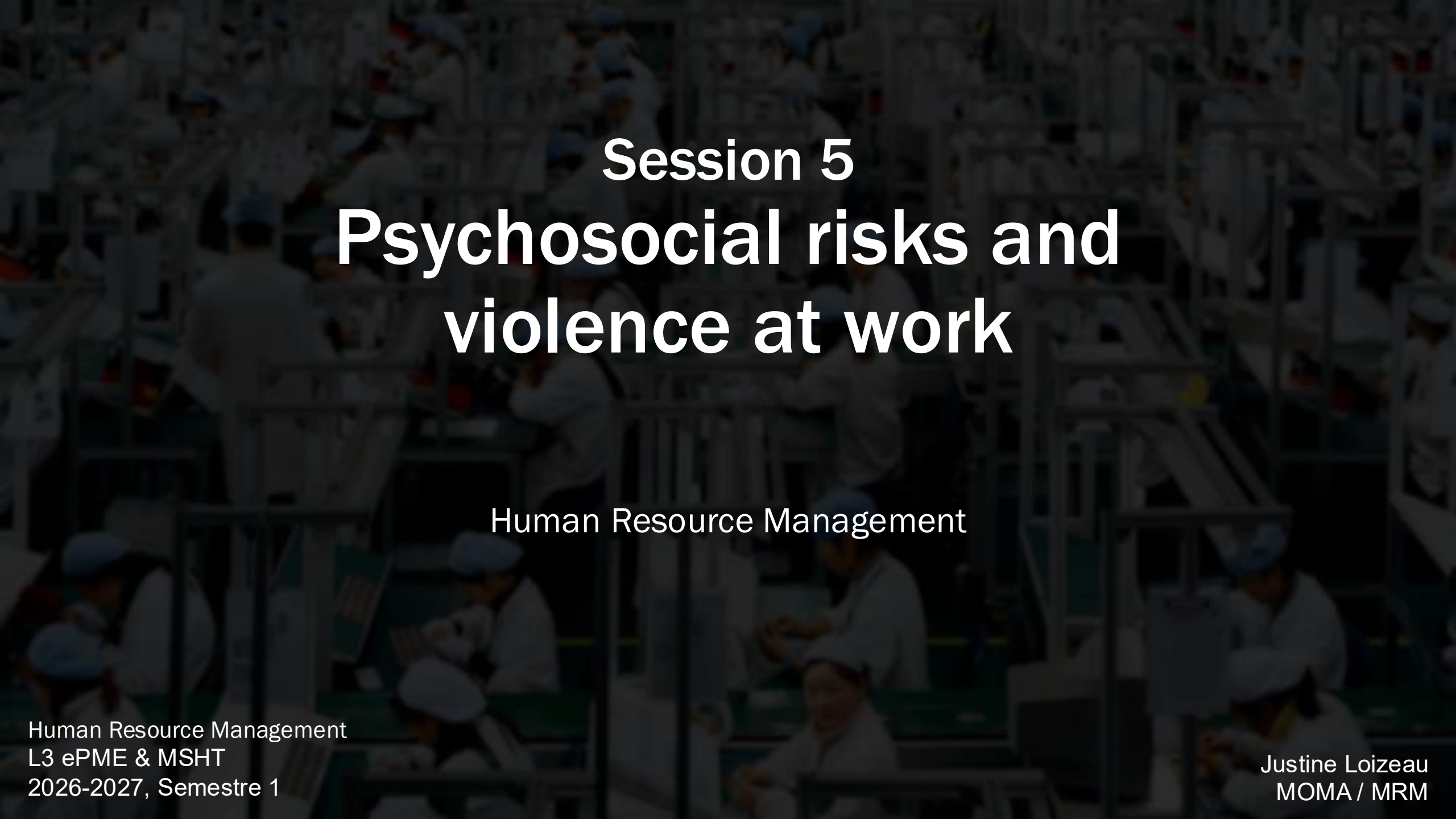




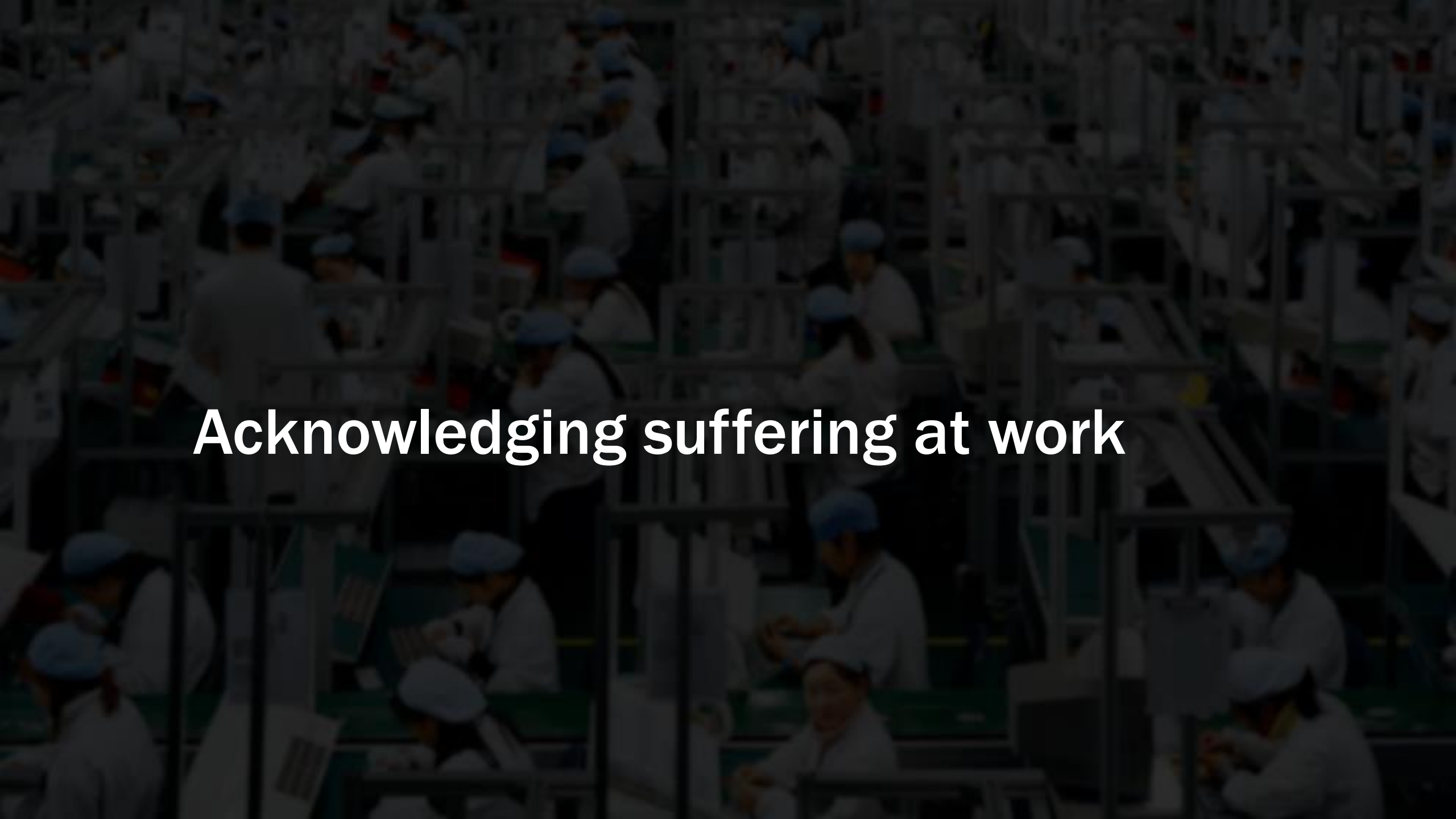
Session 5

Psychosocial risks and violence at work

Human Resource Management



What's in the news?



Acknowledging suffering at work

1. Acknowledging suffering at work

45%

report having to
hurry (always,
often) (2019)

30%

report having
experienced at
least one hostile
behaviour at work
in the past 12
months (2016)

27%

report having to
hide their
emotions, pretend
to be in a good
mood (always,
often) (2019)

25%

say they have to call on others
in case of an incident (2016)

9%

say they have to do things in
their work they disapprove of (2019)

20%

fear losing their job (2019)

Sources: Dares survey «Working conditions—Psychosocial risks», 2016, 2019

1. Acknowledging suffering at work

- 1990s:
 - the clinic of work (clinique du travail) raises the alarm about « suffering at work » (Dejours, 1998);
 - 1998: Hirigoyen popularizes « moral harassment » (harcèlement moral / workplace bullying) → 2002 law;
 - 2008-2009: the France Télécom suicide crisis → the word violence returns to public debate;
 - from 2010 on: the psychosocial-risks (RPS) framework becomes dominant, promoted by the public authorities (Nasse-Légeron report; Gollac & Bodier);
 - 2013: cross-industry agreement on quality of life at work (QVT).
- After France Télécom, the notions of violence and suffering gradually disappear from official vocabulary, replaced by psychosocial risks – the main one being « stress » – then by « well-being at work » (Lachmann et al. report, 2010), presented as a lever of performance



**The current dominant response:
psychosocial risks**

2. The current dominant response: psychosocial risks

- Management uses the framework of **psychosocial risks (RPS)**
 - it comes from Anglo-Saxon standards, disseminated by the ILO (Chappell & Di Martino, Violence at Work).
- The intervention model is borrowed from epidemiology:
 - primary (anticipate the risk)
 - secondary (treat it when it arises)
 - tertiary (support the victims).
- management tools: **hotlines, listening units, spotting the « fragile », e-learning training, coaching**
- **psychosocial-risks (RPS) consulting firms**

A dark, high-angle photograph of a large call center. Numerous employees, mostly women, are seated at long rows of desks. They are wearing light-colored uniforms and blue headsets. The room is filled with computer monitors, keyboards, and office equipment. The lighting is dim, and the overall atmosphere is one of a busy, industrial workspace.

The France Telecom case

2009

ina

« Cette mode du suicide » »

3. The France Telecom case

3.1 From a public administration to a listed company

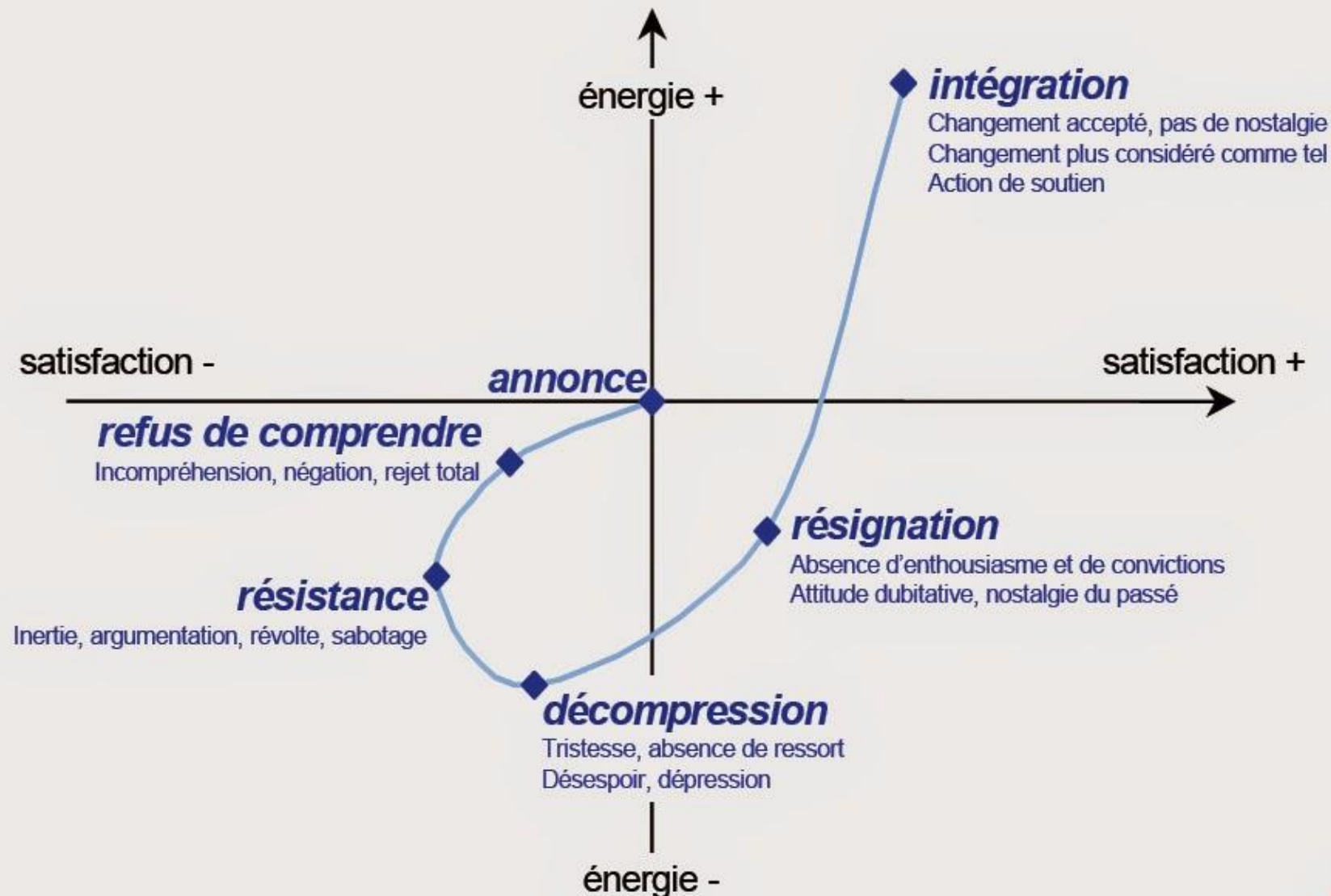
- France Télécom originates in the PTT administration (late 19th c.).
- Under pressure from a European directive imposing the opening of markets, **the firm is privatized** => a change of occupation and identity (Palpacuer & Seignour):
 - Between 1997 and 2007, 100,000 employees change occupation, including 40,000 technicians ordered to become salespeople (whereas their occupation rested on technical expertise and public-service values).
 - Headcount melts away: 162,000 employees in 1997 (90% civil servants), 100,000 in 2008 — **more than 60,000 departures in ten years**.
 - **dividend up** : Result of the 2006-2008 plan: €8bn of cash-flow in 2008, up 39%.

3. The France Telecom case

3.2 The Next plan = Target 22,000 departures, with no possibility of dismissing

- 2005: Didier Lombard becomes CEO;
- the NExT plan targets 22,000 job cuts ($\approx$ 20% of the payroll), 10,000 internal moves, 6,000 hires.
- BUT: most employees are still civil servants — **they cannot be dismissed. They must therefore be made to leave otherwise.**
- Solution: « forced mobility » (mobilité forcée)
 - a change of post that can be imposed every three years; in practice, one every 27 months.
 - 4,000 managers are trained to « make the plan work »: they are given a guide describing the phases of « grief » of the transferred employee (

Le positionnement du salarié, et les phases du deuil



3. The France Telecom case

3.3 The address to senior executives on the Next plan. (2006)

- On 20 October 2006, a confidential address by the CEO and the HR Director before the association of senior executives (made public in 2009).
 - **Financial performance:** « If we want the shareholders to stay, we have to pay dividends at the level of our competitors. »
 - **Social Darwinism:** contempt for the paternalistic values of the former administration.
 - **Authoritarianism:** « In 2007, I'll make the departures happen one way or another, through the window or through the door »;
- This address reveals (Palpacuer & Seignour) the shift from a paternalistic culture to the organized elimination of people to hit numerical targets.

3. The France Telecom case

3.4 The suicides, and the letters that name the employer

« I am killing myself because of my work at France Télécom. It is the only cause. [...] Management by terror! »

Michel D., manager, July 2009

- The warnings precede the crisis (testimonies, whistle-blowers).
- 35 suicides between 2008 and 2009 (more than one a month); 69 recorded as work-related from 2007 to 2011.
- Employees **name their employer** in the act itself, sometimes at the workplace, sometimes in a letter.
- The Observatory of Stress and Forced Mobility identifies five classes of practices aimed at pushing people out (the « 5 M »):
 - forced mobility, perpetual movement, sidelining (mise au placard), forced retirement.

3. The France Telecom case

3.5 Management's response: « contagion effect », « suicide fad »

- **First phase (September 2009) — deny and naturalize.**
 - On 15 September 2009, the CEO blurts out at a press conference: « This suicide fad has to stop. »
- **Second phase (October 2009) — partial acknowledgement.**
 - After two new suicides, Wenès is replaced, « Assizes of social re-foundation » are launched. The CEO acknowledges underestimated « weak signals » and transformations carried out « too fast » — but never the strategic orientations.
 - Measures mostly anecdotal (personalizing the offices);
 - the only real gesture: a freeze on systematic mobility.
 - The Technologia survey (Dec. 2009) nevertheless confirms the essential: 65% of employees report a deterioration of their conditions, and pride of belonging collapses (96% « once proud » → 39% today), the change of strategy being identified as the major source of the loss of meaning.

3. The France Telecom case

3.6 The trial and the verdict (2019): institutional moral harassment »

- The proceedings.
 - Complaint by SUD-PTT (2009) for moral harassment, endangering others, involuntary manslaughter. Labour inspectorate report (4 February 2010) → judicial investigation. Four years of inquiry.
- The trial (2019).
 - Only moral harassment is upheld, across 39 cases: 19 suicides, 12 attempts, 8 cases of depressive symptoms.
 - Prosecuted: Didier Lombard (CEO), Louis-Pierre Wenès (no. 2), Olivier Barberot (HR Director), the company France Télécom-Orange, plus four executives for complicity.
- The verdict: the first conviction of a leader for « institutional moral harassment ». Lombard and Wenès : one year in prison, of which eight months suspended.



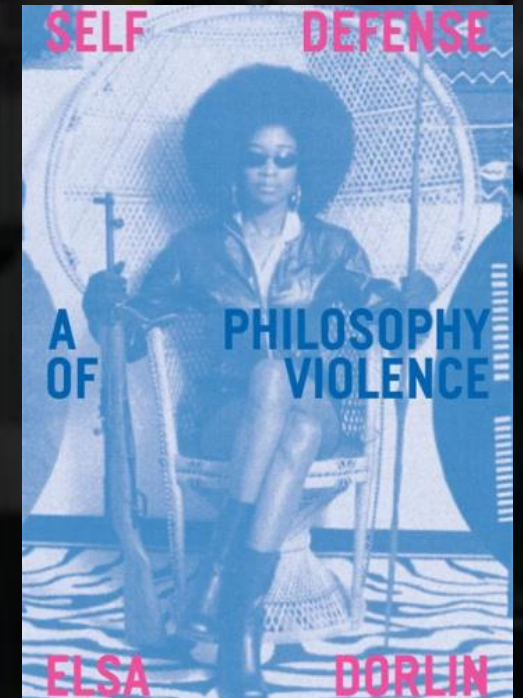
**Two frameworks: the violent
organization and the organization as
victim of violence**

4. Two frameworks: the violent organization and the organization as victim of violence

4.1 What counts as violence is not at all self-evident

« There is no raw experience of violence; it is always mediated by a framework of intelligibility that makes it recognizable. »

Elsa Dorlin, 2017



4. Two frameworks: the violent organization and the organization as victim of violence

4.2 The organization as victim of violence : **violence is a problem FOR the organization**

- The majority paradigm. It dominates research, and above all management practice: it is the one that inspires employers, consultants and public authorities.
- The field: organizational behaviour, at the crossroads of management and psychology.
- The conception of violence : physical (or physical threat), intentional, individual — a matter of behaviour — and costly.
 - It is classed among « deviant behaviours » (workplace deviance), alongside theft, sabotage, work-to-rule, gossip, harassment.
 - A « bad behaviour » among others.

4. Two frameworks: the violent organization and the organization as victim of violence

4.2 The organization as victim of violence : **violence is a problem FOR the organization**

- The logic: the organization is an aggregate of individual behaviours. An individual deviates. The organization suffers the consequences. So it is the victim.
- The role of management: it is the regulator.
 - Violence may be correlated with organizational factors (a restructuring), but these factors are moderated by the quality of management: in a restructuring, violence would come not from the change itself, but from the good or bad management of that change (Barling et al., 2009).
 - → It is never the restructuring that is the problem. It is the way it was managed.
- What do we do? Five priority levers (Neuman & Baron):
 - staff selection (screen out at-risk profiles), managing departures, security, communication, organizational climate.
 - Managing violence = screening out people

4. Two frameworks: the violent organization and the organization as victim of violence

4.3 The violent organization: violence is a problem OF the organization

- The minority paradigm. Marginal in research and practice.
- The field: critical perspectives in management and organization theory.
- The conception of violence : structural as much as physical, symbolic as much as material, organized — produced by practices and processes — and not necessarily intentional: no one needs to want to be violent.

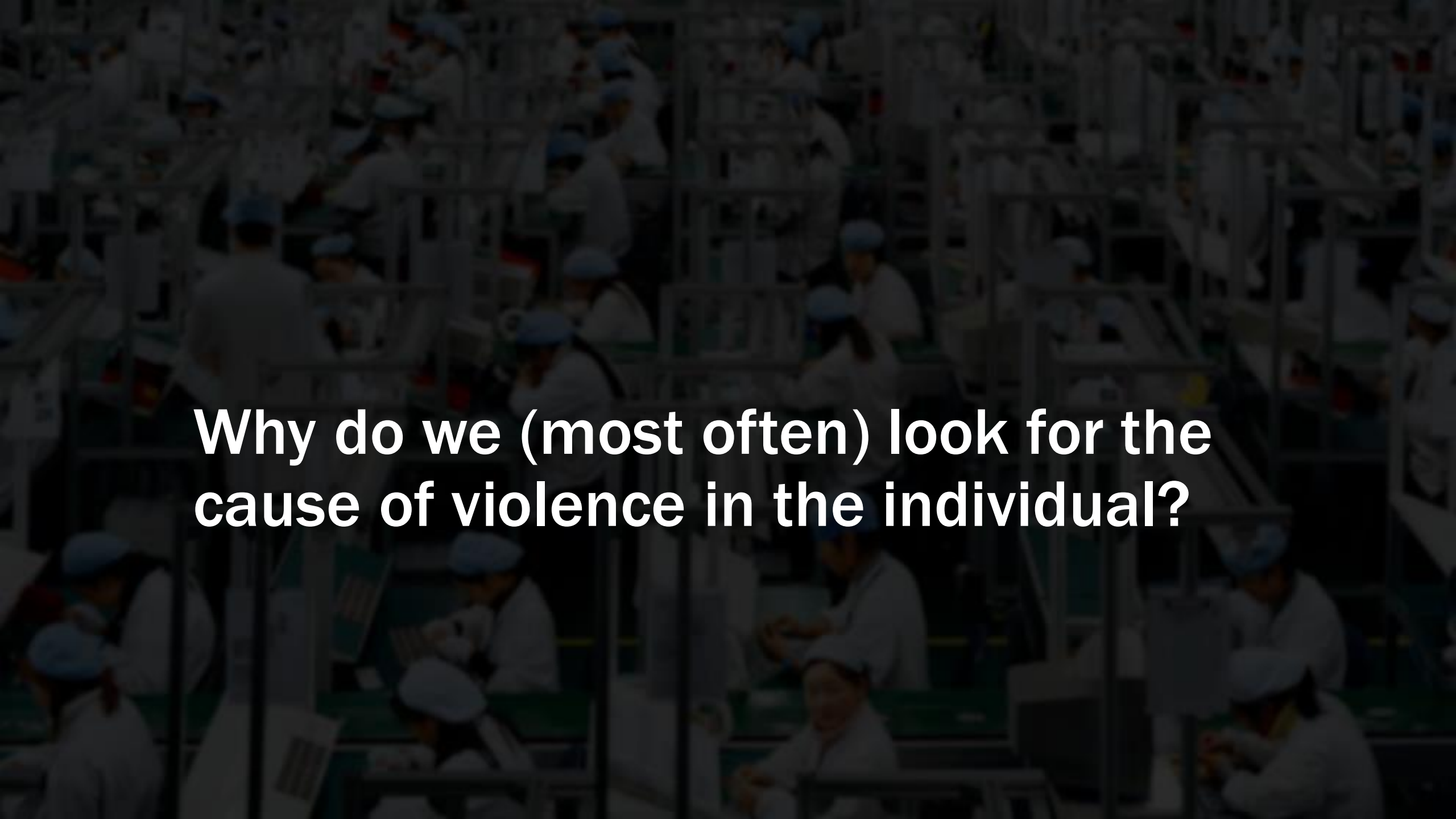
4. Two frameworks: the violent organization and the organization as victim of violence

4.3 The violent organization: violence is a problem OF the organization

- The logic: the organization is not neutral.
 - It is structured by relations of domination — of class, gender, race. Violence within it is a tool for maintaining the organizational order.
- The role of management : it is not the regulator. It is a producer of violence, and it legitimizes it and renders it invisible.
- What do we do? Change the organization structurally. And protect not the organization, but those who suffer.

Which quotation belongs to the « the organization as victim of violence » framework? To « violent organization »? Who is speaking?

1. « This suicide fad has to stop.
2. « There may be among us people who have suffered shocks, who are fragile. »
3. « Management by terror! »
4. « We must question the value created not by people, but by posts. »
5. « There is a contagion effect. »
6. « Institutional moral harassment »



**Why do we (most often) look for the
cause of violence in the individual?**

5. Why do we (most often) look for the cause of violence in the individual?

5.1 historical turning point: from « postal tragedies » to the « crazed mailman » (going postal)

- The field's point of origin. Research on workplace violence is born in the United States, in the late 1980s, out of a series of shootings in post offices (post-office tragedies).
- From 1986 to 1999, 40 people, including 34 employees, are killed by employees or former employees.



The term "Going Postal" originates from the 1986 Edmond Post Office shooting where postal worker Patrick Sherill killed 14 coworkers making it the deadliest workplace shooting in US history

5. Why do we (most often) look for the cause of violence in the individual?

5.1 historical turning point: from « postal tragedies » to the « crazed mailman » (going postal)

- First stage: we look at the organization in the post offices
 - Congress conducts a six-month inquiry.
 - The organizational context is documented: in 1970, the postal administration becomes a public corporation with a profitability objective;`
 - an early-departure plan; `
 - the introduction of scientific management and a sorting machine, which takes away from the employee control over their own pace;
 - pressure on targets, intimidation techniques, precarity.

« The autocratic and paramilitary management techniques used there helped create an environment that drove a man to kill. [...] We are convinced that the management of the Royal Oak post office used discipline to coerce, harass and threaten employees. » Conclusion of William L. Clay, chair of the congressional committee (June 1992)

5. Why do we (most often) look for the cause of violence in the individual?

5.1 historical turning point: from « postal tragedies » to the « crazed mailman » (going postal)

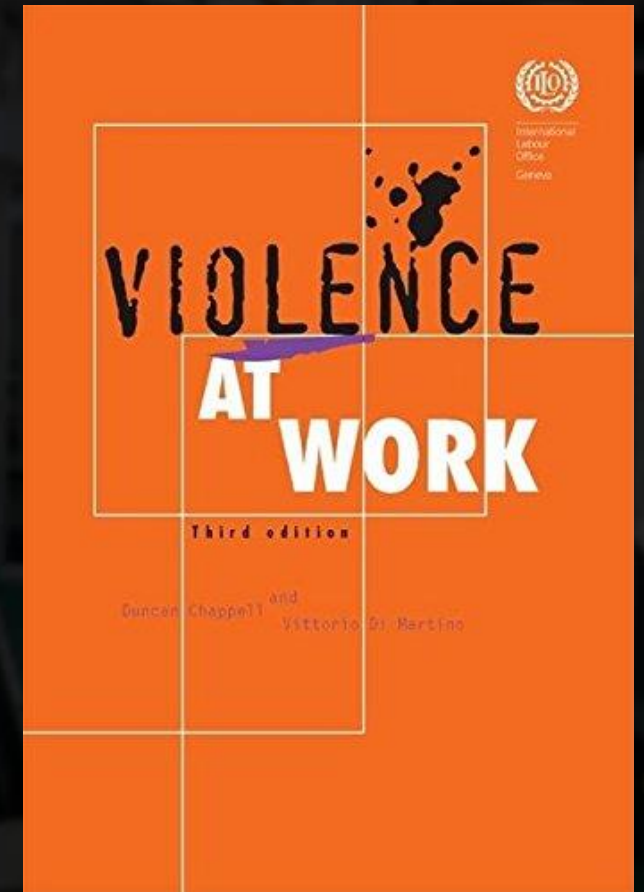
- Second stage: attention shifts toward the individual.
 - Backed by psychologists, the media turn away from working conditions and take an interest in the killers' profile: « a solitary and resentful man in his fifties », a gun enthusiast, depressive.
 - The expression « going postal » enters American slang,
 - **Introduction of profiling.** In 1991, the USPS launches a study to determine the psychological profiles of employees liable to become violent.
 - Stated aim: « to put the emphasis on the recruitment process ».
 - Then the academic field validates

« the USPS is the victim, not the culprit, in these incidents ».
Michael Mantell, psychologist for the San Diego police, in the New York Times

5. Why do we (most often) look for the cause of violence in the individual?

5.2 The business case: violence is costly

- The ILO, in its Violence at Work report (1998), puts forward an argument meant to motivate decision-makers: violence is costly.
 - Cost to society: between 0.5% and 3.5% of annual GDP (Hoel et al., 2001);
 - Cost to American employers: \$4.2bn per year;
 - A serious violent incident: \$250,000; a less serious one: \$25,000.
- How is the cost calculated? One adds up the lost hours, the absences, the sick leaves, the drop in motivation — which translates into a drop in productivity. Then the replacement costs (turnover), the litigation, the reputational damage.
- What this reasoning does. It turns violence into a business case:
 - « an argument for an investment that promises a return large enough to justify the expense ».



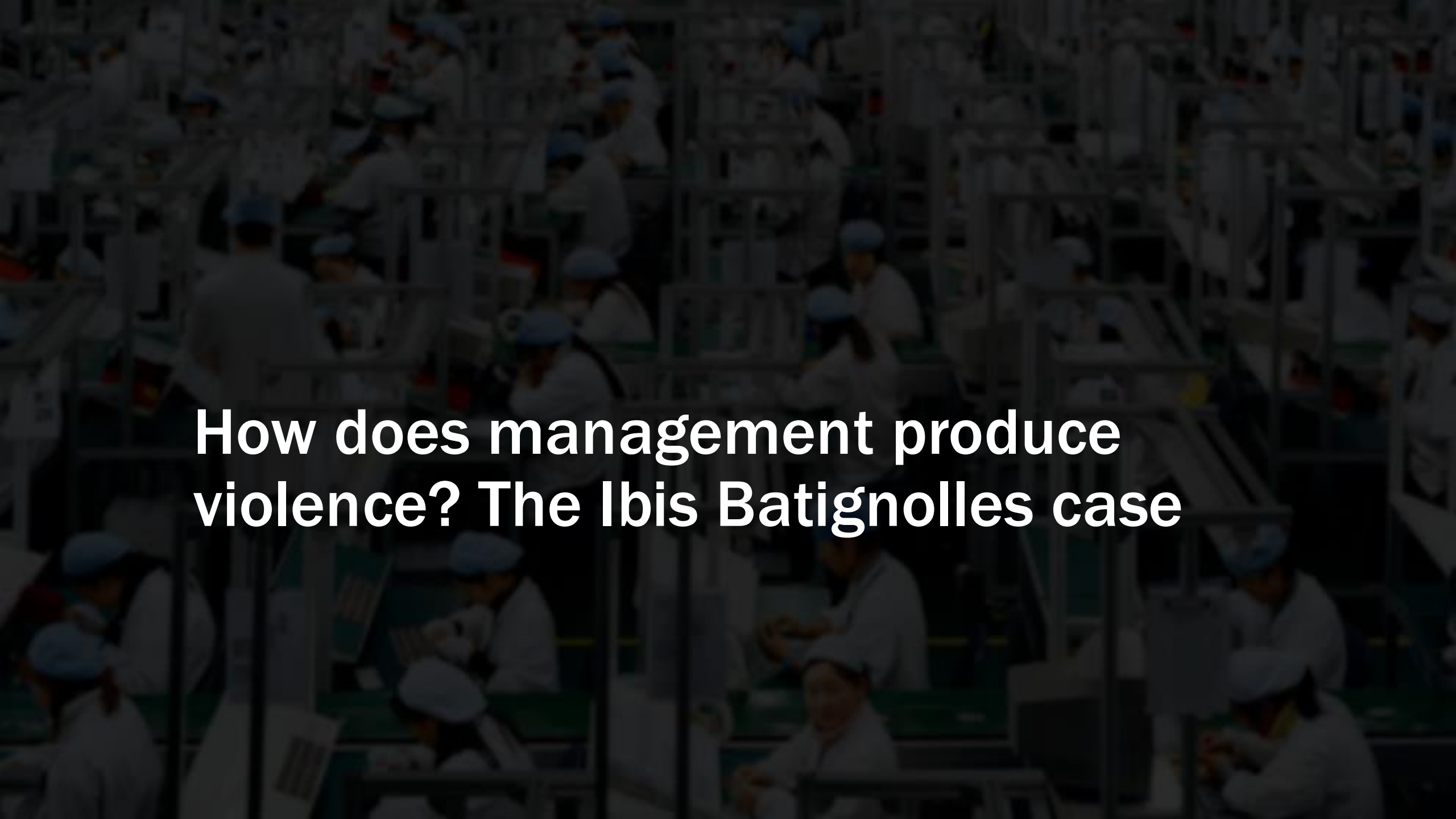
PRÉVENTION DES RISQUES PSYCHOSOCIAUX (RPS)

Votre entreprise souffre d'un absentéisme élevé ou en forte augmentation ? Vous avez des difficultés à fidéliser votre personnel et le turnover est important ? Vous remarquez des tensions/ conflits entre certains de vos collaborateurs ? Vous avez des difficultés à recruter car une image négative de votre société est véhiculée ? Vous constatez une baisse de la productivité et/ou de la qualité ?

Prévenir les risques psychosociaux (RPS) permet aux entreprises de garantir un cadre de travail favorisant la bonne santé de leurs collaborateurs au bénéfice de la performance globale.

Faites le diagnostic et menez des actions de prévention efficaces avec les conseils de nos experts !





How does management produce violence? The Ibis Batignolles case

6. How does management produce violence? The Ibis Batignolles case

6.1 Room attendants (femmes de chambre) against subcontracting

- Between 2019 and 2021, twenty room attendants at the Ibis Batignolles (on the edge of Paris) wage a 22-month strike against the subcontracting of cleaning.
- They target the multinational Accor and demand their internalization — to be employed directly by the hotel.
- Their analysis: the violence they endure is the result of outsourcing, and will cease only through internalization. They call the system « slaverist » (esclavagiste).



The screenshot shows the top portion of a Le Monde article. At the top is the Le Monde logo and a yellow 'S'abonner' button. Below is a navigation bar with links for Trump, Ukraine, International, Planète, Politique, Société (which is underlined), and Éco. The article's category is 'SOCIÉTÉ • CONDITIONS DE TRAVAIL'. The headline is in large, bold, black text. The lead paragraph follows in a smaller font. At the bottom, the author's name and the publication/modification date are listed, along with a clock icon and a 4-minute reading time.

Le Monde [S'abonner](#)

Trump Ukraine International Planète Politique Société Éco

SOCIÉTÉ • CONDITIONS DE TRAVAIL

« Parfois on pleure, tellement nous sommes fatiguées » : avec les femmes de chambre grévistes de l'hôtel Ibis

Les employées de cet hôtel des Batignolles ont déposé un préavis de grève illimitée, pour dénoncer des salaires « misérables » et des mauvais traitements.

Par Victoire Chevreul
Publié le 24 juillet 2019 à 11h16, modifié le 24 juillet 2019 à 11h58
• ⌚ Lecture 4 min.

6. How does management produce violence? The Ibis Batignolles case

6.2 A continuum of violence

« Moral harassment, sexual harassment, gruelling work rates, we suffer a great deal. Maybe to them we are only immigrant women, but we are in a country of law! », Rachel Keke, striker

From the accounts, Cemeno documents four interlocking forms:

- physical (bodies worn out by arduousness);
- sexual (assaults by customers; a rape of a room attendant by a hotel manager);
- material (precarity, pay kept at the lowest, including illegally);
- managerial (the housekeeper's practices described as harassment).

6. How does management produce violence? The Ibis Batignolles case

6.3 Organization « by the room » (à la chambre)

- Work is paid and organized « by the room »: on the number of rooms cleaned, regardless of the actual time.
 - This practice is illegal.
 - Headcount is kept tight, hence « gruelling » work rates at peaks;
 - the workers are sorted according to their « profitability » — short contracts favoured, bodies too worn out transferred or placed under « medical restriction ».
- The denial of real work (Dejours).
 - Distinguish prescribed work — what is officially expected — from real work — what the working person must actually mobilize and adjust to cope with the concrete.

6. How does management produce violence? The Ibis Batignolles case

6.4 The flexibilization of work leads to illegality

The operator does not directly impose an illegal work rate. It negotiates a price.

- The operator (Ibis) demands a price from the subcontractor (cleaning company)
- To reach it, costs must be cut
- Solution: increase flexibility (the mobility clause is not enough. More is needed)
- the subcontractor draws from this an organization « by the room » — illegal — that degrades conditions.
- The degree of degradation follows the allocated budget, itself set by the operator's economic model (worse in budget hospitality).

POINTS

Florence
Aubenas

**Le quai
de Ouistreham**

R E P O R T A G E



**« Un document
exceptionnel »**
ELLE

PRIX AMILA-MECKERT • PRIX JOSEPH-KESSEL
PRIX CRESUS • PRIX DU JOURNAL DU CENTRE
PRIX DE L'ÉTHIQUE • GLOBE DE CRISTAL •
PRIX LIVRES ET DROITS DE L'HOMME DE NANCY



6. How does management produce violence? The Ibis Batignolles case

6.4 Violence made invisible

- **Violence is organized to remain invisible, at three levels :**
 - the subcontractor maintains opacity about its legal obligations and represses resistance;
 - the operator covers up the illegal practices and has its housekeeper supervise workers who are not its own;
 - the hotel group vouches for the operator's reputation in matters of social responsibility.
- ⇒ Violence is neither ignored nor passively tolerated: it is co-managed — so as not to be seen.
- It appears only intermittently, during conflicts — like the 22-month strike.

6. How does management produce violence? The Ibis Batignolles case

6.4 Violence made invisible

- The operator's (Ibis) HR reproduces and normalizes.
 - HR tend to position themselves as an advisory function serving managers, not employees, and to legitimize as « necessary for performance » what the workers endure (Harrington et al.).

6. How does management produce violence? The Ibis Batignolles case

6.5 who is responsible?

The dilution of responsibility

- No employment contract between the hotel group and the room attendants, cleaning contractors operating in their hotels.
 - => They bear no legal responsibility toward them.
- And yet, Ibis declares itself, in its discourse, responsible for all the employees of their value chain — without bearing the legal responsibility for it

6. How does management produce violence? The Ibis Batignolles case

6.5 who is responsible?

Solution: The duty-of-vigilance law (loi sur le devoir de vigilance) (2017)?

- Large firms (French firms with more than 5,000 employees, or 10,000 worldwide) must draw up and implement a vigilance plan:
 - identify and prevent harms to human rights, to health and safety and to the environment resulting from their activities, but also from those of their subsidiaries, subcontractors and suppliers over which they have significant influence.
 - In 2019, Total is the first firm prosecuted on this basis.

6. How does management produce violence? The Ibis Batignolles case

6.5 who is responsible?

Solution: The duty-of-vigilance law (loi sur le devoir de vigilance) (2017)?

- Limits
 - the scope is narrow (more than 5,000 employees),
 - Above all it is an obligation of means, not of result — the firm must prove it has put in place a mechanism (risk mapping, supplier audits), not that it has actually prevented any harm.

6. How does management produce violence? The Ibis Batignolles case

6.5 who is responsible?

A duty-of-vigilance law in the EU?

- 2024 — European directive (CSDDD / CS3D), adopted on 13 June 2024: extends the principle to the European level.
- 2025-2026 — The weakening through the omnibus:
 - the « omnibus package » (EU directive 2026/470, February 2026) raises the thresholds, pushes back the entry into force (2029-2031) and rolls back civil liability. Presented as a « simplification » for competitiveness, criticized as deregulation by NGOs (FIDH, Amnesty).

Summary

- Two frameworks for understanding violence:
 - the organization done violence to (victim of a deviant individual) vs the violent organization (violence is structural, produced by the organization).
 - The France telecom case brings out the confrontation of these two views.
- The dominant response says it is the organization that is done violence to, the fault lies at the level of the individual:
- How management produces violence (Ibis):
 - it draws on and reinforces the systems of oppression in society
 - denial of real work: pay « by the room » denies the actual time (Dejours);
 - managers themselves under constraint: the operator negotiates a price, not a work rate — violence arises from the cascade;
 - normalization, making-invisible

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