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Le paradoxe de l'école de gestion socialement responsable et entrepreneuriale

Auteure :

Lovaso

Ramboarisata

Professeure, ESG

UQAM

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The paradox of the social-entrepreneurial business school



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The paradox of the social-entrepreneurial business school¹

Lovaso Ramboarisata

(ramboarisata.lovasoa@uqam.ca)

Abstract

This paper's objective is threefold. First, it argues for the relevance of the discursive perspective in Neo-institutional theory as an alternative lens to understand the entrepreneurial university. Second, it conceptualizes the coexistence of the entrepreneurial and the social discourses, as they are currently institutionalized in business schools, as a paradox. Third, it uses findings of an empirical study to formulate working hypotheses about the institutional logics and actors in tension.

A thematic-analysis of MBA training and third mission activities in the field of responsible management at major international business schools is conducted. The data include a review of publicly-available materials as well as discussion seminars with teachers and researchers.

Empirical findings echo earlier hypothesized observations or suspicions. The business schools' focus on the commercial end of their entrepreneurship (vs. the one related to scientific and pedagogical innovations) limits the operationalization of their social mission. Working propositions about why the current situation is so and where changes could occur are formulated.

As regards research, this paper situates new waters to be chartered in the debate about the limits of the mainstream performative definition and performance measures of the entrepreneurial university.

Responsible businesses as well as social enterprises make up undoubtedly sustainable economies. Business schools cannot pretend to be fully entrepreneurial if knowledge transfer in responsible management is left aside or serves strictly the commercial purpose.

Keywords

Entrepreneurial university, business school, responsible management education, Neo-institutional theory of organization, CSR.

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Business schools are among the fastest-growing organizations in the higher education sector. Not surprisingly, they are also among those most exposed to the expectations, appraisals, and claims of different stakeholders whose interests and powers are far from being equal. They are undoubtedly pluralistic organizations evolving in multiplex environments (Frolich et al., 2013). This paper focuses on two specific expectations that have been put on business schools for the last twenty years, namely the imperative to be more entrepreneurial and the need to rediscover their social responsibility. It can be asserted that those two ambitions, seen as compatible, had already been those of the founders of the first US business school in the late 19th century (Khurana, 2007). However, demands for their operationalization have been more highly voiced in recent years due to a number of concurrent circumstances (ecological incidents and corporate scandals of the 1990s, reduction of university funding from governmental sources, fast internationalization of business scholarship, etc.).

As regards the concept of entrepreneurial university, building on prior definitions (Clark, 1998 ; Klofsten et al., 1999; Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000; Etzkowitz, 2003, 2004 ; Gibbson et al., 2006), Fayolle and Redford (2014) situate and envision it and its operationalization quite comprehensively as follows, « The modern era acknowledges the importance of a 'Third Mission': the economic and social valorization of knowledge produced by researchers within universities, creating the need for strategies, structures and mechanisms within universities that facilitate and intensify knowledge transfer to the private sector via various avenues : patents, licensing, and facilitating academic spin-offs and start-ups, among others. Universities also need to develop a more entrepreneurial orientation and culture, and university researchers need to become increasingly entrepreneurial (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 1997). Finally, this new model gives a greater importance to the relationships between three types of stakeholders : governments, universities, and businesses » (p. 2).

As regards the social imperative put on business schools (or the social responsibility of business scholars), it aims at abandoning the « bad theories » that had caused bad corporate practices (Ghoshal, 2005). More specifically, some prominent business scholars (for example, Mintzberg, 2004 ; Waddock, 2007 ; Shrivastava, 2010 ; March, 2011) suggest that more research-informed, multidisciplinary, and socially relevant knowledge be transferred to current and futur business-practitioners. Moreover, they draw attention to the urgent needs to make room for developmental, reflexive, critical, creative, and inspirational skills (vs. recipe-like solutions) in business classrooms and to enhance research, teaching, and partnering activities in the field of responsible management or collective organizing (ethics, corporate social responsibility, sustainable development, social and collective entrepreneurship, eco-innovation, etc.) (Waddock, *ibid.*; Doherty et al, 2015 ; Dyllick, 2015 ; Cornuel and Hommel, 2015). A similar plea was voiced by the tenets of « non-Western » or « non-classic » approaches such as those developed in Indigeneous (Nelson, 2008 ; Fitzgibbons and Humphries, 2011 ; MacKinnon, 2012 ; Williams et al., 2012), Oriental - including Chinese (Bettignies et al., 2011) and Mauri (Spiller et al., 2011a et 2011b) -, and « post-colonial » (Banerjee and Linstead, 2004 ; Ibarra-Colado, 2016 ; Banerjee and Tedmanson, 2010, Varman et al., 2011) settings. Such an ambition entails that different types of organizations (not only the private and for-profit ones), and communities be heard and served.

Governments, students, and the corporate world seem to be convinced that business schools should and are able to be both entrepreneurial and socially responsible. Ambidexterity, agility, flexibility, and trustworthiness have been mentioned as traits the contemporary business schools should be developing. However, critics against the perceived commercial features of the entrepreneurial university discourse have amounted within the scholarship. For example, March (ibid.) declares « (...) in order to sustain the temple of education, we probably need to rescue it from those deans, donors, faculty, and students who respond to incentives and calculate consequences » (p. 356). Engwall (2008) raises concerns about the fact that universities have shifted from being « cathedrals of learning » to becoming « cathedrals of earnings ». Others (Corley and Gioia, 2000 ; Zimmerman, 2001 ; Gioia and Corley, 2002 ; Adler and Harzing, 2009 ; Starkey and Tempest , 2009 ; Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007) suspect that commercial-related operations (branding, technology-packaging, and international offerings geared toward « mass-standardization » and « sale », as well as the « ranking games ») have pushed business schools into overweighing « resource allocation decisions which favor marketing and public relations activities toward image building rather than toward critical and important strategic investments in new models of teaching and learning » (Thomas and Cornuel, 2012, p. 330). In light of these critics, is it still realistic to view business schools' current entrepreneurship (especially their suspected over-focus on commercial operations) and their expected commitment to the common good and to the higher aims of education (by serving different types of knowledge, organizations, and communities) as compatible?

This papers' objective is threefold. First, it argues for the relevance of the discursive perspective in Neo-institutional theory as an alternative lens to understand the entrepreneurial university. Second, it conceptualizes the coexistence of the entrepreneurial and the social discourses, as they are currently institutionalized in business schools, as a paradox. Third, it uses findings of an empirical study to formulate working hypotheses about the institutional logics and actors in tension.

Our idea is developed in five parts. In the following section, we explain the implications of conceptualizing entrepreneurship and socially responsibility of universities - and more specifically, business schools - as discourses embedded in a complex institutional setting. That allows us to suggest that an institutionalist-discursive approach is a relevant but overlooked approach to the understanding of the entrepreneurial university and its tensions with other ideals. The subsequent section portrays the paradox that is emerging from the coexistence of the ideals of entrepreneurship and social responsibility in business schools, as both have become institutionalized discourses and been codified in formal practices and techniques of control. Then, we explain that current entrepreneurial activities of major business schools (executive training and third mission) have not significantly conformed to the social turn. That situation is illustrative of the paradox mentioned earlier. In the fourth section, we present the implications of our argument in terms of working propositions to be explored in future research. We conclude our paper by explaining its main contributions and limitations.

1. « Entrepreneurial university » and the « socially responsible university » as discourses

The literature on entrepreneurial university is mainly composed of work the emphases of which have been on the outcomes of entrepreneurial activities, the policy and market

stilumi for academic entrepreneurship, and the managerial traits of entrepreneurial academic actors (firm-like, adaptability to change, agility, ability to make hard choices) (Mautner, 2005). Most prior work considered institutional setting as mere managerial context within which hard strategic choices have to be made. These earlier studies overlooked the fact that alongside being a space for and an object of entrepreneurship, and beyond forming a field of entrepreneurial practices and techniques of control, a university is a field of tensions (Philpott et al., 2011) and one of institutionalization of different discourses (Florich et al., *ibid.*). The social process of entrepreneuring (actors' and organizational discourses, legitimation and interactions), the multiple nature of the institutional setting in which such a process takes place, and its complexity (paradoxes, dilemmas, power struggle) have been in the blind spots of the mainstream research or strictly considered as threats and opportunities to be taken into account in university governance and change management. Consequently, the institutional and discursive embeddedness of the entrepreneurial university has been under-investigated. However, understanding the complexity of that embeddedness is relevant for university managers and their professional and academic members who would like to take a reflexive stance towards the discourses about entrepreneurship they carry and those born by different stakeholders, instead of mimicking a one-size-fits-all approach from other contexts.

Inquiries adopting an agnostic or critical stance (such as those of Scott et al., 2001; Ranga et al., 2003; Williams and Kitaev, 2005; Reid and Schofield, 2006; Bubela and Caulfield, 2010; Philpott et al., *ibid.*) form exceptions in the literature. These take a distance from the mainstream prescriptive and normative approaches and from the focus on outcome and harder entrepreneurial activities. They draw attention to the softer activities and their institutional framing as well as to the tension-bearing attribute of the entrepreneurial university ideal. Our work builds on that recent ambition.

Informed by the discursive approach in Neo-institutional theory of organizations (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Jepperson, 1991; Czarniawska and Jorges, 1996; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008; Hasselbladh and Kallinikos, 2000; Phillips et al., 2004; Kallinikos and Hasselbladh, 2009), our paper suggests that the unfolding of the abstract ideals of both the « entrepreneurial » and the « socially responsible » university - and more specifically, business schools -, into institutionalized discourses and subsequently, into organizational practices and techniques of control (Figure 1)² be examined. This « travel » is embedded in regulative, normative, and cognitive institutions (Scott, 1995) (Figure 2). The latter generally command which senses or meanings have to prevail. Thus, in the unfolding of an ideal into institutionalized discourse, some senses may be lost, twisted or undermined; whereas some others may be overvalued, and new ones may even be incorporated.

Conceptualizing entrepreneurship and social responsibility of universities as discourses may provide an insight into why these concepts, which are seen as enjoying a benign coexistence at the idealistic level, drift apart once they are institutionalized and materialized into organizational routinized practices and techniques of control. Moreover,

² Basic abstract ideals are developing into distinctive ways of defining and acting upon reality (i.e. discourses). These are then supported by elaborate systems of measurement and documentation for controlling action outcomes (Hasselbladh et Kallinikos, *ibid.*, p.704).

taking into account their embeddedness in a multiplex institutional setting provides an explanation of the multiple yet contradictory forces that struggle for meaning during the process of institutionalization. This, in turn, may shed light on why the taken-for-granted compatibility of these ideals may not produce the desired win-win outcomes.

Figure 1 : The unfolding of an ideal into discourse, practices, and techniques of control (adapted from Hasselbladh and Kallinikos, 2000)

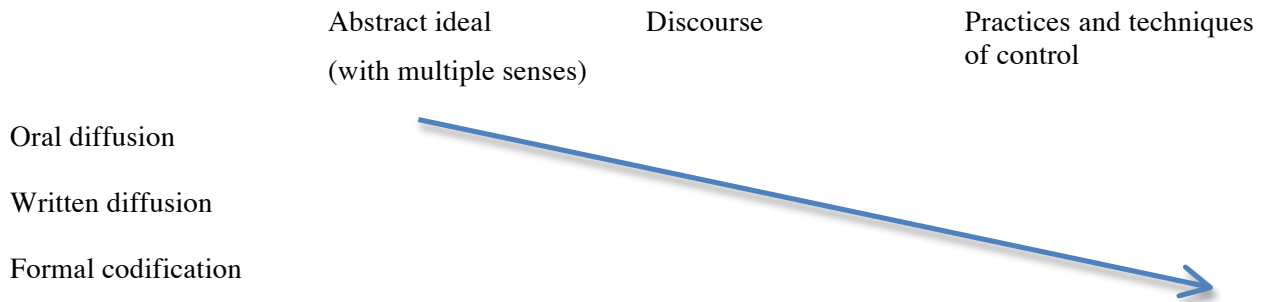
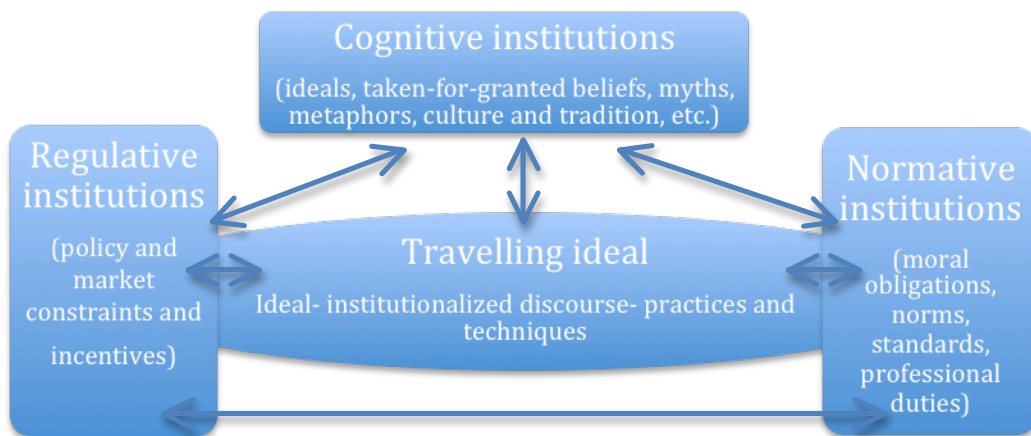


Figure 2 : The institutional embeddedness of an ideal's travel



2. The paradox of the social-entrepreneurial business school

As Philpott et al. (ibid., p. 162) recall, «As defined by Ezkowitz et al. (2000), an entrepreneurial university is any university that undertakes entrepreneurial activities ‘...with the objective of improving regional or national economic performance as well as the university’s financial advantage and that of its faculty’. (...) Together with this dual mission of teaching and research, the entrepreneurial university adopts the third mission of contributing to economic development». That objective can be achieved through a spectrum of activities, ranging from hard to soft ones in the following order : creation of a technology park, spin-off firm formation, patenting and licensing, contract research, industry training courses, consulting, grantsmanship, publishing academic results, and producing high qualified graduates. In this section, we argue that the contribution of a university and its scientific members to society, known as the third mission, is a meaning or a sense that is found in both the ideal of the entrepreneurial university and that of the socially responsible university. However, in its institutionalization trajectory, the entrepreneurial university has overvalued the quest for financial performance (all-the-board cost-effectiveness and new income-stream creation), or the sole commercial meaning of entrepreneurship, to the detriment of the socio-economic one. The cases of business schools epitomize such a trend. Consequently, the coexistence of both discourses (social and entrepreneurial) forms a paradox.

2.1. *The entrepreneurial discourse*

According to Mowery et al. (2004), the hardest activities of the entrepreneurial spectrum, such as patenting and licensing, are of minor relevance to areas outside of software and biosciences. Most entrepreneurial activities by social sciences’ departments and faculties, including business schools, are on the softer end of the spectrum.

Many track back the invention of the term « entrepreneurial university » to authors such as Burton R. Clark and Henry Etzkowitz in the late 1990s. However, the ideal of making scientific knowledge contribute to socio-economic development is an old one. The ‘third-mission’ had been served in many settings long before the term « entrepreneurial university » was buzzed in the literature. In Canada, for example, the creation of the University Settlement of Montreal in 1910 can be considered as a materialization of the idea of « scientific collaborating with society » (Park et al., 1993). More broadly in North America, despite its attenuation in the post-war period, partnering between scientific actors and those of the socio-economic world has been revitalized since the 1960s. It has been broadly translated into consulting, contract reasearch, action-research, intervention-research, collaborative research, participative research, and other forms of partnering³.

³ « In the past, universities generally operated on the deficit model: the community, or society at large, had certain needs, and the university, as the home of experts, would fill these needs. In other cases, the community was merely seen as laboratory, with more or less compliant "guinea pigs." In a partnership model, things are more equal. It is acknowledged that both parties have needs and that success requires a mutual recognition of needs, shared problem definition, and a joint search for solutions. » (Wiewel and Broski, 1997, p. 2)

Moreover, it has been inclusive of different types of partners (private firms, public administration, social and solidarity economy enterprises, unions, associations). In Europe, although socio-economic contribution of social scientists through partnering is recent in countries such as France, it has been a tradition in others such as Belgium, Spain, and the Netherlands. In the latter, « knowledge boutiques » have embodied the « citizen component of the university's mission », by serving low-income beneficiaries. Similar patterns have been found in Latin America. Social inclusion and innovations entailed by these different types of science-society alliance can be considered coherent with the ambitions of the knowledge economy (Walshok, 1995 ; Wiewel and Browksi, *ibid.* ; Chekoway, 2001, Soska and Butterfield, 2005).

What seems new, since the 1990s, is the positioning of the entrepreneurial university's operationalization within the competitiveness agenda of governments (more specifically in Europe) as well as the focus on its income-bearing attribute, the organizational changes it has entailed (or should entail) in universities, and the emphasis on its techno-scientific harder components. Mautner (*ibid.*, p. 96) explains : « The social, political, and educational context in which they have moved centre-stage is a complex mesh of trends including the reduction of government funding, the consequent necessity to raise money from external, frequently corporate, sources, deregulation, increased competition and internationalisation, and the replacement of collegial by managerial (or, as critics would have it, managerialist) governance structures. ». These were already suggested a decade earlier by Slaughter and Leslie (1997).

Scientific networks and individuals, backed by normative institutions such as the OECD and contributing to OECD's Higher Education Program as well as its *Journal of the Program on the Institutional Management in Higher Education*, can also be considered as having promoted the economic sense of the entrepreneurial university ideal. According to Mautner (*ibid.*), although a number of studies have reported on the causes and effects of university fields' transformation in different countries (more specifically in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia), many of them carried performative discourses aiming at reinforcing perceived or real trends instead of questioning them. Hence, notions and outcome criteria they promoted have become taken-for-granted ways (cognitive institutions) of defining and assessing the entrepreneurship performance of universities. These are in turn being transferred to member-government policies (regulative institutions). Philpott et al. (*ibid.*) expressed a similar suspicion.

In major business schools' setting, this « academic capitalism » (Slaughter and Leslie, *ibid.*) seems strong. The nature of the entrepreneurial practices and techniques of control seem to corroborate the above-mentioned concerns. These practices and techniques include a tighter financial risk-based regulation (Hommel and King, 2013), more top-down hierarchy driven by autonomy-favourable local policies (Alajoutsijarvi and Kettunen, 2016), tailoring of activities to international normative institutions such as accreditations bodies and to regulative ones such as ranking mechanisms, for branding purpose (Corley and Gioia, 2000 ; Gioia and Corley, 2002 ; Adler, 2009 ; Khurana and Snook, 2011). Fast internationalization of MBAs regardless of learning needs (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007),

mass-standardization and technology-packaging of undergraduate teaching (Colby et al., 2011), and increased offerings of corporate training, most exclusively to beneficiaries who can afford to pay the price, due to fierce competition with corporate universities (Khurana and Snook, *ibid.*) all exacerbate the perceived commercial trend. We also suspect a desertion of the not-so-lucrative beneficiaries, as university-community alliances were traditionally supported by government research funding.

These regulative and normative pressures for more commercial operations, and resulting in a less socially inclusive entrepreneurial university, have been transformed into and reinforced by taken-for-grantedness (a cognitive institution) about the business schools' performance (Kettunen et al., 2015). The latter is more and more defined in terms of image and reputation (proxied by ranking position and accreditation) (Corley and Gioia, *ibid.*; Gioia and Corley, *ibid.*), financial and governance autonomy (Alajoutsijarvi and Kettunen, *ibid.*), international status, and the volume of technology-packaged courses and programs (Colby et al., *ibid.*; Dyllick, *ibid.*; Doherty et al., *ibid.*).

2.2. The social responsibility discourse

In their almost a century and a half existence, business schools have been vested of at least three ideals of responsibility (vocational, unifying, and societal). Each of the latter has known its particular period of institutionalization (and hence, its translation into a specific discourse, and subsequently, into practices and techniques), although all three can still be found simultaneously in their fields nowadays (Khurana, *ibid.*, Beusch, 2014). All three share the ambition of seeing management as a professional discipline, founded on a rigorous science and practiced by trustworthy individuals. From his founding of the first American business school at the University of Pennsylvania in 1881, the industrial philanthropist Joseph Wharton saw the service to the common good as one of the duties of university graduates. Such a common good, during that industrial revolution era, meant being efficient in technical resource management in order to contribute to the economy. From the 1920s, the scientific community (a normative institution) put more emphasis on the administrative sense of management and considered business schools as having to produce knowledge in human relations. Overall, the period of 1881-1945 was that of the institutionalization of the vocational discourse about the responsibility of business schools. The produced and transferred knowledge were expected to benefit private businessmen and their enterprises who were in turn sources of wealth and employment. Interactions of Management's first scientists with the socio-economic actors were through technical and functional teaching, as well as conferences. It is not exaggerated to say that those socio-economic actors were mere receivers of ready-to-use knowledge. The 1950s brought a significant change into the prevailing meaning of business schools' responsibility. Following the well-known Gordon-Howell report, legitimized by government favourable appraisal (a mix of regulative and cognitive institutions), the unifying discourse entered into institutionalization (Simon, 1967; Augier and March, 2011; Khurana and Spender, 2012). It was mainly done through the creation of the GSIA (Graduate School of Industrial Administration at the University of Carnegie-Mellon) model of business school. The Cernegie and Ford foundations were very active in backing the diffusion of that model, which aimed at making management a more rigorous and unified field, in order to provide the business discipline with a scientific legitimacy. Business schools were expected to

become the scientific pillar of capitalism during that cold war era. The quest for the general theory of the firm (or the one best and unified scientific discourse) was the new meaning incorporated into the responsibility of business schools. Scientists (for example, system thinkers, behavioural experts, contingency theorists) from other disciplines (economy, sociology, political science, anthropology, mathematics) and from other countries were invited to contribute and welcome as long as they were compliant to the unifying aspiration. During the decades of 1950-1980, business schools' interaction with the socio-economic actors other than their financial allies (the US government and the Carnegie and Ford foundations) was at its lowest. Research relevance was defined in positivist terms. Business students were taught the principles of a few theories of the firm and given the cognitive skills and tools (simulation, case studies) to apply them in different situations. From the 1970s, however, critics started to emerge. Some business scholars saw that the professional project (the common-good service and trustworthiness meanings) were twisted and became a sole service to the market (Beusch, *ibid.*). This was especially noted during the 1980s, as agency and transaction-cost theories' instruments were largely diffused following a performative mode. In addition to the multiplication of disappointed voices within the Anglo-Saxon business scholarship, other organization theorizing, which counter-balanced the unifying discourse, were developed in other parts of the world (Continental Europe, Scandinavia, emerging economies). A new discourse seemed to be in a process of institutionalization. Groundbreaking perspectives and their proponents were taking roots in the academy (for example, Critical Management Studies). New divisions were created in major scientific associations (for example the ONE or Organizations and the Natural Environment at the Academy of Management). Iconic scholars voiced their disappointment and their call for changes (for example, Mintzberg, 2004 ; Ghoshal, 2005 ; Khurana, *ibid.* ; March, 2011). Accreditation bodies such as the AACSB have strongly encouraged business schools to teach ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The disappointed scholars, the critics, the proponents of plural organization theorizing, and even the market-motivated ones (willing to respond to job market's demands for ethical training of business practitioners) seemed to be willing to emphasize the social meaning of business schools' responsibility. That call for a social turn was reinforced by pro-sustainable-development policies in different countries, incentives from the financial and consumer markets for virtue (regulative institutions), scientific community and accreditation bodies' push for ethics and CSR (normative institutions), as well as by widespread public beliefs that business schools should serve the society (cognitive institutions). From the mid-2000s on, three points have been recurrent in that new (or resuscitated and revisited) discourse :

- Since business schools' student-population is composed of not only current and future managers of private for-profit firms but also of potential social entrepreneurs, practitioners in the public and collective spheres (such as the social economy sector), other socio-economic and community leaders, engaged citizens, policy-makers, scientists, and researchers⁴ ; the knowledge these schools produce and transfer should be designed and delivered accordingly.

⁴ Recent statistics available on the websites of major business schools, which show that the vast majority of graduate business students is coming from other disciplines (engineering, law, natural sciences, other social sciences), seem to validate that pretention.

- Plurality (of paradigms, disciplines, theoretical approaches, objects, types of organizations studies, methods, types of knowledge) should be encouraged in research. Hence opening up to knowledge co-construction with other disciplines' scientists (interdisciplinary approach) and other actors such as those of the industrial world and civil society (transdisciplinary approach) is essential.
- Participatory approach aiming at developmental, reflexive, critical, and aspirational learning should be encouraged in teaching and other forms of knowledge transfer (executive training, third-mission, outreach, continuing education, etc.).
- Scientific relevance should be redefined to include social utility.

2.3. A forced marriage?

In light of the above-explained trends and social expectations, the idea of business schools acting in entrepreneurial ways while pursuing a social mission seems paradoxical. In a quest for commercial performance - through prioritizing cost-effective activities (mass-standardization and technology-packaging of undergraduate teaching), creating new income-streams or reinforcing existing ones (internationalization of MBAs, glocal offerings of corporate training, etc.) -, backed by branding operations, it stands to reason that business schools will most probably not choose to continue serving less fortunate socio-economic allies (for example, small social enterprises, which cannot necessarily afford the services of the entrepreneurial university). The managers of those schools will also be less interested in supporting the conduct of pedagogical and research innovations (for example, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, action-research and partenarial ones) that require more time and faculty-resource investments without the demonstration of short-term financial returns. If those innovations would subsist, it can be assumed that they were individual or group efforts rather than organizational or institutional ones. Let us also recall that financing of partenarial research with the social economy and the non-profit sector has traditionally been through public funding in countries such as Canada, Belgium, Spain, and Latin American ones.

While the entrepreneurial university ideal was supposed to serve local socio-economic development, its rationalization narrative especially in business schools, has made entrepreneurship and social responsibility two not-so-aligned logics. How the entrepreneurial discourse is being applied can end up excluding some research contributions and some forms of knowledge-building, transfer and use (especially those which require long-term and much iterative, reflexive, collective work) to which the social discourse aspires, as well as some users, those who cannot afford it. That concerns more specifically fields such as ethics, CSR, sustainable development, social entrepreneurship, eco-innovation, collective governance, etc. The nature of those fields' knowledge has made their building and transfer more complex and time-consuming.

3. The detachment of the social aspiration from the entrepreneurial activities of business schools

Taking preliminary conclusions from our ongoing research project⁵ as illustrative of the above-described paradox, we provide below an account of: 1) how the idea of serving

⁵ A three-year larger project, which started in Summer 2014 the aim of which is to examine the pattern of socio-critical knowledge producing and transfer by business scholars in Canada, as compared to those in other

different types of knowledge, organizations, and communities persist in the definition scholars, in the field of socially responsible business, give to the socially responsible universities and business schools ; and 2) the weak integration of social and critical knowledge content and pedagogy in the entrepreneurial activities of business schools (executive training and third mission).

3.1. *The aspirations of social business scholars*

The first part of our project was exploratory and consisted of a literature review and four group-discussions⁶. A qualitative thematic-analysis was used⁷ in order to understand : 1) how the « socially responsible business-school » is idealistically defined by the participants (social business scholars), 2) what responsible management education (research, teaching, and outreach) should consist of, and how its success should be measured, 3) what are the main practical drivers and drawbacks of innovations in that field, and 4) what lessons can be learned from their experiences in national and international settings. The following recurrent observations can be drawn:

- Business scholars in the field of ethics, CSR, sustainable development and related areas believe that business schools should build different types of knowledge belonging to different paradigms, using different types of methodology. According to their view, the business scholarship community should open itself up more to knowledge co-production following interdisciplinary and partenarial approaches (transdisciplinary, action-research).
- They admit that authentic and relevant knowledge in the field of responsible management is of a complex and critical nature. It asks « big » institutional or system questions, beyond the technical and « business-case » ones⁸.

countries. The project has three stages. The first two have ended, and their preliminary conclusions are the ones presented in this paper. The third stage starts in January 2017.

⁶ The four events were on the topic of « The social responsibility of business schools and scholars ». The first one was a workshop held in Montreal (Canada) in February 2015, and gathered 15 participants including faculty members, lecturers, and graduate students in the fields of CSR (corporate social responsibility) and RME (responsible management education). The second one was a seminar organized in Montreal in July 2015, during the annual congress of the RIODD (the French acronym for the International Research Network in Organizations and Sustainable Development). Twelve researchers, university teachers, and consultants from Perou, Germany, Canada, and France took part. The third one was a workshop which took place in Marrakech (Morocco) in March 2016. In the first part of the activity, a panel of three senior strategy and CSR professors presented their experiences. In its second part, a dozen of other participants (researchers and university teachers from Morocco, Tunisia, France, and Canada) participated in a group-discussion. The fourth was a roundtable held in Saint-Etienne (France) in July 2016. Seven Canadian and French professors from different fields (economy, strategy, HR, marketing, finance, and accounting) took part.

⁷ Our specific objective, at this stage of our research project, was first to understand (*versus* measure or test) the sense that social business educators are making of socially responsible business scholarship. Such an inquiry was seldom conducted in the past, making ours an exploratory one (earlier empirical studies were mainly based on literature reviews). Hence, a discourse-framing using a qualitative thematic-analysis of the information collected through the literature and the group discussions was chosen as the data-processing method. Qualitative thematic-analysis has been suggested and used as a suitable technique in « sense-making » and « sense-giving » studies, especially for exploratory purpose (Miles and Huberman, 1994 ; Patton, 2002).

⁸ Business-case “ refers to the arguments or rationales supporting or documenting why the business

- Many of them are convinced that lessons can be learned from the traditions and experiences of the social and solidarity economy organizations, the non-profit sector, and the non-Anglo-saxon settings (Indigenous, Latin-American, French-speaking, Scandinavian, Oriental, African and Asian « post-colonial » contexts, etc.). The latter should be studied more often by business scholars. Moreover, knowledge transfer should take a translative approach (*versus* an applicative one), taking into account the socio-political project and the pluralistic and collective attributes of different types of organizing mode.
- According to a majority of them, for the social turn to be effectively operational, instructional and pedagogical approaches in business education should be transformed and geared towards developmental, reflexive, and creative learning, beyond the acquisition of cognitive skills.
- A majority thinks that performance of research and teaching in the field of responsible management, CSR, and sustainability, as well as in the social and the non-profit sectors, should be assessed differently from that of traditional business fields. Conduct of those non-traditional but relevant instructional and research projects can take longer periods of time and more investments in faculty-resources and materials. However, their outcomes may need a longer horizon to assess and take a form which is different from those habitually related to the mainstream measures of short-term cost-effectiveness.
- They believe that the socio-critical project of CSR and sustainability research, teaching, and outreach is relevant to national socio-economic development.
- Those who can be considered innovators (CSR or sustainability research centers' managers, faculty members who created specialized courses in responsible management, and those who manage specialized undergraduate and graduate programs) think that their instructional and research innovations cannot be sustained without adequate organizational and institutional supports. Through their choices of resource allocation and performance measures, organizational decision-makers (business-schools' managers) and institutional stakeholders (for example, accreditation bodies, funders, rankings' promoters, public policy makers, academic journals, etc.) can induce or block the necessary social turn in business schools.

3.2. The absence of a social turn in the entrepreneurial activities of business schools

The second part of our project was an analysis of the executive MBA teaching and the third mission activities⁹ at major business schools. The sample under investigation was composed of the 121 business schools (58% from North America, 25 % from Europe, 14 % from Asia-Pacific, 2 % from Central and Latin America, and 1 % from Africa) that were part

community should accept and advance the CSR 'cause'. The business case is concerned with the primary question: What do the business community and organizations get out of CSR; that is, how do they benefit tangibly from engaging in CSR policies, activities and practices? For most, the business case refers to the bottom-line reasons for businesses pursuing CSR strategies and policies." (Carroll and Shabana 2010, p. 86).

⁹ As operationalized through collaborative projects, outreach, and institutional support to enterprising.

of the 2015 « Better World MBA » ranking of the Corporate Knights Magazine¹⁰. The latter scores business schools' performance on their research (number of centers and publications) and teaching (number and relevance of courses) in the field of ethics, CSR, and sustainable development. The schools were first selected by Corporate Knights from the Financial Times ranking. Hence, they are the major ones in the world¹¹. Sources we used to collect data on teaching content included the Corporate Knights' publicly available database¹² and the schools' websites. Sources we used to collect information on the third mission activities were the schools' websites and their last PRME reports¹³ when available. The latter are publicly-available documents published periodically by the signatories of the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management Education¹⁴.

A thematic-analysis, using categories identified in prior work (Rossow 2002, Waddock *ibid.*, Raufflet and Schmitt 2015), as well as other emerging field categories, has allowed us to map the volume, the foci (themes, objectives, instructional, pedagogical, and or participatory approaches) of the courses and third mission initiatives¹⁵. The main conclusions that can be drawn are as follows :

- As a field of research, responsible management (ethics, CSR, sustainable development, and related themes) is voluminous and highly-developed in the majority of business schools, as shown by the scores the latter obtained from Corporate Knights. Research centers' mission and activities, as well as the latest publications of researchers, reverbate what recent literature reviews reported (for example, Lockett et al., 2006; Crane et al., 2009; Gond and Moon, 2011; Taneja et al, 2011; Wang et al., 2016). Themes, theoretical approaches, types of organizations investigated, and methodologies have become plural and enriched with perspectives from other parts of the world. The traditionally dominant North-American business-case and normative research is now being counter-balanced by those novel ones.

¹⁰ « Better World MBA » is the only ranking of business schools based on RME-performance. Its earlier competitor, the « Beyond Grey Pinstripes » ranking is not operational anymore. As our study aimed at framing the discourse of business schools as regards their social responsibility, we considered this sample as a relevant one. Moreover, this sample is mainly composed of large international and accredited business schools within which the paradox formed by the co-existence of the « social responsibility » and the « entrepreneurial » discourses is most probably observable.

¹¹ A small number (21 out of 121 in the 2015 edition) were not from the Financial Times ranking but were included because they had performed well in earlier editions of the « Better World MBA ».

¹² The database may be accessed by following this link : <http://www.corporateknights.com/reports/2015-global-sustainable-mba/>

¹³ The reports may be accessed by following this link: <http://www.unprme.org/sharing-information-on-progress/participant-reports.php>

¹⁴ In its SIP (sharing information on progress) report, a signatory school report on how it has valued, promoted, and operationalized the six principles of the PRME. Activities related to the fifth and sixth principles, partnership and dialogue, are related to the third mission.

¹⁵ The specific empirical question explored is : for which purpose and how entrepreneurial activities (executive MBA training and third mission) are delivered. Answering that question, through means-end-framing allowed us to assess if a significant social turn was occurring in business schools. Means-end-framing was used by other earlier studies rooted in the same discursive-institutionalist approach we used as our theoretical framework (for example, Boxenbaum, 2006).

Themes range from techno-environmental to socio-political objects. Research questions span from those of situated innovation diffusion to those of hybridization of regulative forces. Paradigms encompass the ensemble often found in social sciences – functionalist, constructivist, and critical.

- However, this rich available knowledge is not transferred via executive training, at least through the executive MBA channel, which is the flagship program of most business schools. Around third of the major business schools do not offer a course or any form of training in ethics, CSR, sustainable development, or related topics. Among the schools which teach these subjects, 75 % use traditional instructional approaches, do not include the recent insights from research or pedagogies that aim at developmental, reflexive, and creative learning skills. Overall, teaching seems not to be informed by the latest perspectives in research, especially, interdisciplinary and collaborative ones. The schools, which are the most innovative in centers' activities and active in publications, are not necessarily the ones that have developed non-business-case content as well as critical and participatory pedagogy.
- Knowledge in the field of responsible management is quasi-absent from the third mission activities of large business schools. Moreover, the few schools that have integrated it into their entrepreneurial activities use a passive mode. The beneficiaries (students and organizational stakeholders) are mere receivers of published research notes, speakers' talk in web-video or in conference series, awards in a CSR or sustainability business case contest rather than active participants and co-producers. Less than 10 % of the schools in our sample offer an institutional support to public or students' social and green ventures (for example, awards for winners of green enterprise business plan contest, social innovation consulting practicum and labs). A small 7 % of centers dedicated to CSR and sustainability include partenarial research in their mission. Most of their transfer vehicles are workshops, conferences, and research papers. Outreach programs of most business schools, in the social and green fields, are limited to sponsoring of student clubs engaged in charity and community development, and of events (for example, sustainability week, case competition, etc.). The current practices give the impression that business schools do not consider knowledge in CSR and sustainability as part of their contribution to socio-economic development through their third mission.
- The third sector (non-profit, social and solidarity economy) is under-served, both in executive MBA training and in the third mission. For example, only 6,5% of the courses taught focus on the idiosyncratic challenges of those organizations and their social innovations' attributes. Business scholars publish work on social, collective, and hybrid organizations though. But, as mobilizing the available knowledge about these enterprises indeed requires a more participatory approach, not always suitable in mass and passive delivery or in a speed-and-income-pressured setting, such a knowledge ends up being out of reach of those who most need it.

In light of these findings, it is clear that the aspirations of social business scholars and the knowledge they produce are not translated into executive training, outreach, and socio-economic collaborations. In other words, they are not made available to organizations and

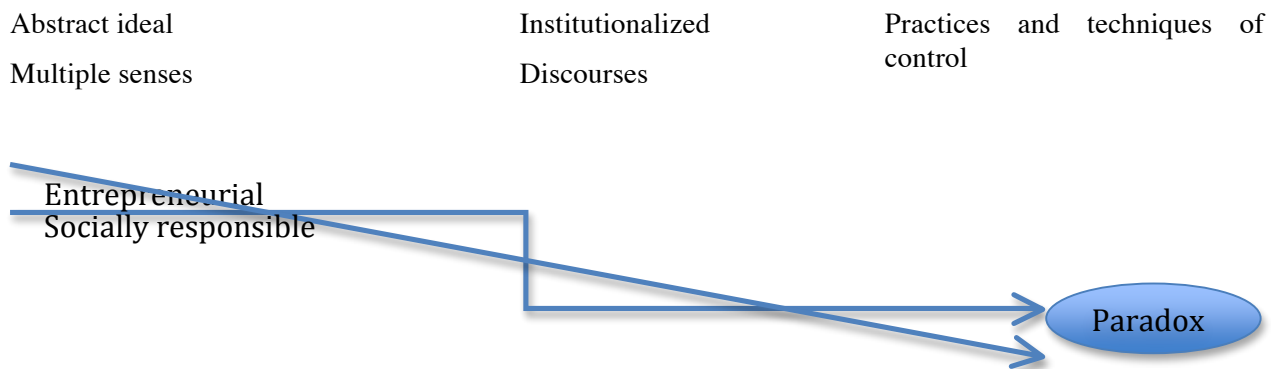
society through the entrepreneurial channels.

As both the logics of entrepreneurial and socially responsible business schools depart from their idealistic level to land in teaching and third mission practices, after submitting themselves to different institutional forces, their co-existence ends up forming a paradox. The latter is suspected, in prior writings, as caused by the focus of business schools' operational practices and techniques of control on the commercial end of the entrepreneurship, rather than on the innovative scientific and pedagogical ones. How entrepreneurial university has been rationalized in discourses in the business schools setting has detached it from some of its basic aspirational senses.

4. Implications

So far, we have unpacked the ideals of the entrepreneurial and the social responsibility of business schools and displayed their different meanings or senses. We have portrayed their respective trajectory into institutionalized discourses. We have traced their paradoxical encounter at the practical and technical level of the scholarship, and used early conclusions from our empirical research project to illustrate that paradox. Since our analysis is grounded in an institutionalist-discursive approach, once the discursive component is set (Figure 3), the next step is to address the institutionalist one (from Figure 2).

Figure 3 : The travel of the entrepreneurial and social responsibility ideals in the business scholarship field



The argument we developed in previous sections allows us to formulate a number of working propositions, regarding the institutional embeddedness of the paradoxical coexistence of the entrepreneurial and the social responsibility discourses in the field of business scholarship.

Proposition 1 : Cognitive institutions such as scientific tradition and regional culture can be vehicles of the social meaning of the entrepreneurial university (*versus* solely the financial

and the commercial ones), counter-balancing other institutional forces which tend to inhibit it¹⁶.

Proposition 2 : In a public-resource scarcity and national competitive strategy-building context, regulative institutions (mostly, states and markets), through both constraints and incentives, tend to overvalue the income-bearing sense of the entrepreneurial university, and twist the socio-economic meaning of the latter into a financial and or commercial one.

Proposition 3 : International normative actors (for example, OECD, accreditation bodies) and regulative ones (for example, the European Commission, university and business school's ranking mechanisms) can frame the definition and the key performance indicators of the entrepreneurial university. The latter can be reinforced by scientific legitimacy (cognitive institution) and local policies (regulative institution).

Proposition 4 : Sustained critics and voiced aspirations among business scholars (cognitive institutions) and the groups to which they identify themselves (for example, scholarly associations or networks) can reinforce the social meaning of business schools' responsibility and support a mission aiming at serving different types of knowledge (including those co-produced in interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity), different types of organizations (for-profit, non-profit, social and solidarity economy, etc.) and communities.

Proposition 5 : A single institutional actor may bear paradoxical discourses¹⁷, which can be interpreted as an unauthentic behaviour, a dissonance or a decoupling strategy. However, this can be explained by its own embeddedness in a mesh of multiple and contradictory institutional logics.

Proposition 6 : The social ideal would most probably remain unfulfilled, and some socio-economic actors (for example, those of the social and non-profit sectors), under-served, as long as the business schools' entrepreneurial practices and techniques of control were biased towards the quest for across-the-board cost-effectiveness and short-term income streams. Furthermore, this would be detrimental to socio-economic development.

¹⁶ As materialized, for example, by the tradition of socially-inclusive partenarial research in some regions (Québec Canada, Belgium, Spain, Latin America).

¹⁷ This applies to different institutions, as earlier observations (such as those of Doherty et al., *ibid.* ; Dyllick, *ibid.* ; Hommel and Cornuel, *ibid.* ; Kettunen et al. , *ibid.* ; Alajoutsijarvi and Kettunen, *ibid.*) suggested (for example through national governments' higher education policies, accreditation bodies' criteria and procedures, the scientific community itself, universities' as well as business schools' policies, governance, and strategic plans). For example, many of these institutions ask business scholars to be socially responsible and creative by conducting novel research, research-informed teaching, and innovative instructional and pedagogical approaches. However, the criteria they use to appraise the schools and the scholars' performance are often focused on the commercial end of entrepreneurship (versus the scientifically-innovative ones). Most of the times, the sole indicators used are the volume of teaching (for example, number of international MBAs, number of undergraduate courses and programs, foreign-language packaging, technology-packaging such as in MOOCs, Coursera, and hybrid teaching), regardless of what that means in terms of learning and skills developed; volume of research centers and rhythm of publications, regardless of whether or not they use groundbreaking approaches and methods of knowledge production and transfer (versus traditional ones); and image assessed by business media and their ranking system that use and reproduce the similar criteria. High volume and speed of production and transfer are not suitable for many types of innovative knowledge (for example, co-produced and participative ones) though.

We suggest that these working propositions be empirically explored in future research. We believe that their implications can be extended to other faculties, and even to the whole university. Moreover, we suggest that they be operationalized in a larger international setting, including non-Western and non-Anglo-saxon regions. As were other American management fads, styles, education approach and tools (Gemelli, 1995 ; Kipping et al., 2004 ; Augier and March, 2011 ; Alcadipani and Caldas, 2012), the discourses of social responsibility and entrepreneurial university are spreading in other countries. Consequently, the paradox we have described may well occur in those countries' business schools. An obvious next research challenge is to test those propositions, and to discover the degree of that paradox in different geographical and cultural contexts. It will as well be interesting to highlight the configuration and the respective importance of the regulative, the normative, and the cognitive institutional pressures shaping that paradox in each of those particular settings. Furthermore, future research questions should be extended to those related to the day-to-day management of paradox and the tensions it entails. Paradox-management enjoys a thriving theoretical development in organization studies these last thirty years but still needs empirical insights from different sectors and types of organization (Poole and Van de Ven, 1989 ; Lewis, 2000 ; Clegg et al., 2002 ; Smith and Lewis, 2011 ; Smith and Tracey, 2016). Higher education organizations have seldom been studied in that field. They form a relevant sample though, especially for those interested in the complementarities of institutional complexity and paradox perspectives (see for example Smith and Tracey, *ibid.*)

This papers'findings and subsequent proposals have also a practical relevance as had earlier papers which looked at the entrepreneurial university discourse with an agnostic or critical lens (for example, Scott et al., 2001; Ranga et al., 2003 ; Williams and Kitaev, 2005 ; Reid and Schofield, 2006 ; Bubela and Caulfield, 2010 ; Philpott et al., *ibid.*). They remind business schools' managers and institutional stakeholders (for example, accreditation bodies, funders, rankings'promoters, public policy makers, etc.) of the risky consequence of letting the market logic become the prominent one in higher-education organizations. When pressured to prioritize the short-term financial and commercial outcomes of their activities, business schools may not search into other ideals anymore (academic, social, civic, etc.). As the dominant entrepreneurial discourse gains the struggles for meaning and become the institutionalized mandate under which all others have to be subordinated, business-schools may jeopardize their very socio-economic mission. For business schools'managers, there is a choice to be made, at least, concerning the time horizons of competing objectives' pursuit. So far, the successful social-entrepreneurial business-school seems to be a myth. Business schools' managers cannot keep making believe that they are able to deliver simultaneously both authentic entrepreneurial and social outcomes, as long as the entrepreneurship definition and measures are not rethought through and negotiated upon. Institutional stakeholders need to be warned that no economy can remain sustainable without authentic responsible businesses and social enterprises, supported by a relevant knowledge. Business schools and universities cannot be considered fully entrepreneurial if knowledge transfer in responsible management and collective organizing is not given sufficient consideration or is solely measured against commercial purpose. The current situation is also an opportunity for other institutional stakeholders (for example, scholarly associations and networks) to step in and exercise their role in promoting

alternative discourses on higher education organizations' entrepreneurship as well as alternative measures of higher education organizations' performance.

5. Conclusion

Is there such a thing as a social-entrepreneurial business school ? Although many business schools' managers and stakeholders believe that there is, the ways entrepreneurship and social responsibility are currently put into practice in business schools make it a paradox. Our paper elaborates on the discursive status of such a paradox, drawing from early conclusions of our ongoing research project. Moreover, it sketches the institutional conditions of that paradox's formation, by putting together insights from Neo-institutional theory, RME (responsible management education), and entrepreneurial university earlier work. Then, it suggests working hypotheses for future studies.

Our general contribution is the translation and the integration of the former suspicions expressed by the tenets the critical approaches to RME and entrepreneurial university into formal working hypotheses. We suggest that the latter be tested in a larger international setting. More specifically, our paper makes conceptual contributions to the fields of entrepreneurial university and RME as well as an empirical contribution to that of Neo-institutional theory of organizations.

As regards the field of entrepreneurial university, former conceptualization was mostly normative (prescriptive, functionalist, tension-free). The mainstream debates were focused much more either on the macro-institutional explanations of the entrepreneurial university, mostly higher education policies in different countries, or on the techniques of control that should be imposed on universities, mainly financial governance and performance control (including reputation through ranking and accreditation, in the case of business schools). The discourse of entrepreneurial university itself has remained a black box. It has not been unpacked or evaluated against the ideal it originated from. It is often forgotten that the discourse adopted by organizations is the one that has gained the struggle of meaning among alternative ones referring to the same ideal. Entrepreneurial relevance has been defined mainly in business-case terms, on the side of the stakeholders (hoping for the research to provide tools, technologies and recipe-like procedures to help firms gain short-term commercial and financial performance), and in income terms, on the side of the universities and their faculties and research centers, which have adopted « firm-like » behaviour (Etzkowitz, 2003). By conceptualizing university as a field of tensions and entrepreneurial university as a discourse, our paper raises awareness about the relevance and legitimacy of other existing but overlooked meanings of the socio-economic responsibility of higher education organizations.

Concerning the field of RME, our paper gathers in a single framework (adapted from Scott, 1995) the institutional explanations of the so-called « unfulfilled promise of responsible management education » (Cornuel and Hommel, 2015). Former work treated the regulative, normative, and cognitive components separately. They were focused strictly either on normative forces such as accreditations or on regulative ones such as the ranking systems (Corley and Gioia, 2000 ; Gioia and Corley, 2002 ; Adler, 2009 ; Khurana and Snook, 2011) or the new financial-risk-based norms to which higher education organizations have to conform (Hommel and King, 2013). The role of cognitive institutions (such as ideals, cultural tradition, persistent myths and metaphors, taken-for-granted meanings of

university and business schools' performance) were overlooked. Plus, those earlier writings consisted less of empirical inquiry, and more of a mix of blaming, nostalgic discourses, and rhetoric (Cornuel and Hommel, *ibid.*). Comprehensive conceptual framing and exploratory investigation were scarce. However, these should be conducted prior to any extensive qualitative or quantitative empirical validation. Our paper fills in that very gap by: 1) proposing an integrative conceptual framework, 2) using evidence from our exploratory research to formally back formerly-expressed suspicions, and 3) suggesting a set of working hypotheses, useful for subsequent studies.

As mentioned above, our paper's contribution to the NIT (Neo-institutional theory of organizations) is an empirical one. The field of NIT has long been over-focused on the « adaptivist » or « diffusionist » approach. As Hasselbladh and Kallinikos (2010, p.698) reminded: « The empirical agenda of neo-institutionalism has, by and large, explored *structural isomorphism* » as an aspect of the bureaucratization process among firms and public organizations in modern societies (...). Criticizing that dominant agenda, proponents of the discursive approach contended that « (...) there is a need to move beyond the somewhat idealistic (i.e. spillover of disembodied ideas) approach to rationalization that characterizes neo-institutionalism and consider the various ways by which ideas are objectified i.e. developed and embedded into solid and durable artefacts. » (Hasselbladh and Kallinikos, *ibid.*, p.699). By examining the ways the idea of entrepreneurial university is objectified in artefacts (instructional, pedagogical, and technological), our paper makes a contribution to that discursive turn.

The main limitation of our inquiry is a methodological one. The sample used for our empirical study, composed of large international business schools, has limited the discovery of small and more locally-rooted ones. However, the latter may be more apt in resolving the paradox of the social-entrepreneurial university, especially if they have both a strong pro-social professoral basis and favourable regulative stimuli (for example, higher education policies that favour partenarial research with the third sector). Our emphasis on MBA training forms another limitation. The next step of our project will consider the cases of other schools and undergraduate activities. As we expressed in the « Implications » section of our paper, among the next obvious stages is the the examination of the how the paradox we have characterized is managed in different settings, including non-Western and non-Anglo-saxon ones.

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