



**Management international
International Management
Gestión Internacional**

*Call for contributions to
the workshop on*

**Business schools¹ : object of criticism,
yet actors of resistance and (their) change ?**

*held at ESG UQAM
(École des sciences de la gestion, Université du Québec à Montréal)
October 1st, 2019*

*and the associated call for contribution to the special issue of **Management
International***

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¹ In this call, we use « business school » as a generic and inclusive term. We recognize that in some settings such as in France, institutions lodging business scholarships and teaching are varied, and that « business schools » are only one category among others. However, for the purpose of this call, « business school » is used to designate any higher education organization in the business/management/commerce discipline (university faculty, institute such as the IAE in France, school of commerce, center such as the CNAM in France).



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Nowadays, more and more observers portray business schools as weakly reflexive actors reproducing the oppressions of a neo-liberal system in demise. According to such a radical perspective, it is assumed business schools could not be reformed and that any critique of the immoderations of capitalism will end up being instrumentalized. Overtaking that radical stance, we call for a proper recognition of and an inquiry into the local and collective forms of resistance taking place in business schools. Our call also aims at highlighting the change-bearing practices and discourses among business scholars.

Context : diffusion of neo-liberal rules

This call is inscribed within the enduring debate about the legitimacy and the legitimizing modes of the business discipline, business scholars, business schools, and the relevance of the knowledge they produce and teach². The context of higher education organizations, embodied in legitimation authorities, is often taken-for-granted as true and fair. It is mostly appraised following an adaptative—thus weakly emancipatory—logics.

In such a context, business schools seem to be internalizing financial capitalism and actively practising academic capitalism. A body of research examining that change has been developing. It has encompassed the following, among other objects and issues:

- Business schools as socialization spaces and as identity workspaces (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010 ; Fourcade & Khurana, 2013; Germain & Taskin, 2017; Lezaun & Muniesa, 2017) ;
- Dominant metaphors, imaginations, and narratives to which members (faculty members, students, deans...) acquiesce (Ortiz & Muniesa, 2018) and which are embodied in major stakeholders' disciplining tools (foundations, accreditation agencies, business media such as *Financial Times* and *The Economist*, and their ranking mechanisms) (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996 ; Wedlin, 2006, 2007, 2011; Gioia & Corley, 2002) ;
- Business schools' genealogy (Augier & Prietula, 2007) and identity (Khurana, 2007 ; Dunne et al., 2008 ; Khurana & Snook, 2011), the legitimacy and the legitimation of their research and teaching models (Elsbach et Kramer, 1996), and the reproduction of the « world-class » fantasies through the diffusion of international branch campuses (Alajoutsijarvi et al., 2015 ; Siltaoja, Juusola, & Kivijarvi, 2018).

Higher education organizations which serve as the vehicles of academic capitalism have been characterised in the literature as entrepreneurial, corporatized, managerialized, quasi-firm, neoliberal, and commodified (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997 ; Eskowitz, 2003 ; Mautner, 2005 ; Engwall, 2008 ; Laszlo, Sroufe & Waddock, 2017 ; Special issue « Labour of Academia » of the

² See, for example, Anderson, Hibbert, Mason, & Rivers, 2018, describing the project *Management Knowledge and Education Project* within the *Academy of British Management*; Paul Adler's presidential address to the members of the *Academy of Management*, Adler, 2016 ; the propositions in the *Routledge Companion to Reinventing Management Education*, Steyaert, Beyes, & Parker, 2016)



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review *Ephemera*, Butler, Delaney, & Sliwa, 2017). They act as the scientific counterparts of financialized corporations and of New-public-management-driven public organizations. Both in countries well known for their radical higher education reforms (United Kingdom, Australia) and in others, researchers have noted the consolidation of disciplining rules and practices of human resource management (hiring, evaluation, performance incentives...), the increasing competition between scholars, and the exacerbation of gender issues. Neoliberal rules' diffusion have also enhanced identity assignation among scholars. Such an assignation acts as a power of inclusion of a few (the elite professor, the star researcher, the entrepreneurial scholar), to the detriment of the rest. Whilst universities and business schools are traditionally characterized as pluralistic organizations, born by competing logics in continuing tension, the neo-liberal order tends to erase that pluralism. Only univocal objectives seem to be promoted and end up playing a disciplinary role. Furthermore, this weakening of the creative tensions entails a profusion of a performative and naturalizing discourse that reinforces the teaching schools/research schools dichotomy.

The theorizing of the business school as a neoliberal institution is already well documented. Our call prioritises contributions highlighting strategies of resistance and those examining spaces, discourses, and practices in and through which emancipatory alternatives emerge. Despite its grounding in a critical perspective³, it aims at overtaking mere denunciations. It foresees the possibility for academic actors to take control of, while renewing, their professional identity and their profession to the service of emancipation. The latter would be epitomized in alternative content as well as in novel forms and modes of knowledge production, teaching, and outreach with the larger system of business education and scholarship. Consequently, the aim of the workshop and the special issue is to gather contributions which inquire into the implications of this new context. More specifically, we target three axes : temporality, spatiality, and the dialectics of domination/emancipation.

1. Temporality

The managerialization of business schools has spurred, among other temporal implications, the acceleration of scientific production and the multiplication of opportunistic alliances between scholars (speed dating and networking), the standardization of publications (given the hiking number of manuscripts to be reviewed within a restricted timeframe), and the arhythmic organization

³ As many authors (for example, Alvesson, Willmott, & Bridgman, 2009, Duberley & Johnson, 2009 ; Taskin & Nanteuil, 2011 ; Taskin & Willmott, 2008) elaborated, this perspective is characterised by:

- A deconstruction of what is considered obvious and taken-for-granted in management theories and practices.
- A reinsertion of the questions of power and control in organization studies : emphasizing power asymetry and forms of domination embodied in discourses, identities, practices, and knowledge.
- A recognition and a valorisation of reflexivity. It means that a researcher should be apt to reflect on and question management practices and his or her own interpretation of a reality which he or she helped frame.
- A recognition of the plurality of frames on which management practices and goals are pursued (versus the sole performance ethos).
- A strong questioning of the performativity of what is said, known, practised, and taught as well as a commitment to change practices.



of the scholar's work. The unique and dominant view of the academic time and rhythm is strongly enshrined in practice and seldom questioned. It promotes continuing evaluation, measures, fast pace, urgency, etc. Subordination to this unique view leads to the colonialization of the future, thus refraining a variety of subjectivities and logics of creation from being deployed (de Lagasnerie, 2011). In sum, such a normalized time jeopardizes the ecology of ideas, privileging solely gap-filling approaches to the detriment of other ones which build new questions and carry new issues (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013).

We invite contributors to examine the diffusion of the normalized unique time among the community of business scholars and its implications. For example, with a focus on (i) rhythm and pace of academic work in business schools and their implications to scholars' relations with each other; (ii) business scholars' strategies (coping and resistance); (iii) alternative temporalities and discourses about time in academia (for example, the discourse on slow research).

2. Spatiality

The diffusion of normalized management knowledge and practices through spaces—often deligitimizing locally-rooted, territorially-grounded, idiosyncratic modes of knowing—is a well-documented phenomenon.

- a) The formation of a global social and cultural space has been the product of capitalist mechanisms of deterritorialization (following the definition of Deleuze & Guattari). For the business education system, it has taken the form of geographic stratification (Hall, 2008 ; Hall et Appleyard, 2009), the normalization of the codes and the norms of the spatially-advantaged top-tier schools, and the fast-circulating of standardized practices.
- b) Not only has the global space generated a lack of opportunity for differentiation, but it has also muted the criticism of the culturally-dominant, Euro-centric and North-American business research and education practices (Kipping et al., 2004 ; Cooke & Alcadipani, 2015 ; Alcadipani, 2017). Post-industrial revolutions have imposed a unique conception of business schools, one framed following the Global North model.
- c) Business schools' spatial realm cannot be disconnected from the ongoing questioning of social and business spaces. Similar to the latter, it is a gender, hetero-normative, racialized, and homogenous space.
- d) At a more local level, business schools can also be considered as heterotopic spaces, able to suspend those institutional games, generate alternative possibilities, as well as liminal spaces between the world of ideas and that of practices, between the student, the scholar, and the business practitioner.
- e) In such an alternative space, constructed by a variety of academic and non-academic actors, new practices are experimented. Business scholars and educators can use them as objects of exploration, theorization, and teaching, following novel modes of knowledge production and diffusion.



We invite contributors to investigate the diffusion of the spatial elitism discourse (elite, world-class business schools) (Siltaoja, Juusola et Kivijarvi, 2018) and, most importantly, the strategies of actors claiming and building alternative territoriality, making possible and supporting the elaboration of more resilient management practices, in coherence with environmental and social sustainability. We also call for proposals using post-colonial and feminist approaches in order to deconstruct the dominant narratives about business schools' space.

3. *Dialectics of domination/emancipation*

Business schools are definitely spaces where behaviours are normalized and disciplinary power, enforced (Wedlin, 2006, 2007, 2011; Gioia & Corley, 2002). Nonetheless, they are also inhabited by actions of resistance and alternative-production (Devinney, Dowling & Perm-Ajcharyawong 2008; Beaujolin-Bellet & Griman, 2011 ; Rowlinson & Hassard, 2011 ; Bristow, Ratle, & Robinson, 2017). They are called upon to renew themselves, to reclaim agency, and to free themselves from the isomorphic pressures which used to dictate their passive behaviours. Questions such as « How to find a sustainable space between the constraint of legitimacy in a hyper-institutionalized field and the will to deploy forms of emancipation ? » are being asked in business schools.

We invite contributions that present and or foresee business schools and the whole business scholarship community (including scientific associations, events, reviews, etc.) as spaces where new legitimacies are constructed, fields and territories are used as new grounding and deployment of alliances, collective forms of resistance and invention, and embodying of interconnected social movements. We are also interested in inquiries about business schools as spaces for the creation of contexts where plural identities are deployed, new forms of research and pedagogy are expressed, questions of gender are reclaimed, and the *raison d'être* of higher education is reminded (civic mission, public good, freedom, empowerment, etc.)

Expected contributions:

The editorial team would like to allow the publication of contributions which use various and original writing forms without sacrificing scientific rigor. The team does not discourage traditional writing forms. We also invite papers which use methodologies such as auto-ethnography, observation, shadowing, etc. ; which use videos, photos, arts, fiction, drawing as primary or secondary data ; and or which use novel writing strategies such as creative non fiction, empirical vignettes...

Studies conducted with the researchers' own schools and or academic setting (similar to those of Girei, 2017 ; Lui & Pechenkina, 2016 ; Pechenkina & Liu, 2018 ; O'Shea, 2018) or questioning their own practices and identities are particularly welcome.

Following the tradition of *Management International*, the special issue aims at presenting and comparing experiences (cases, comparative studies, contextualization...) from different cultural contexts.



KEY DATES

- **Deadline for the submission of extended abstract (1500 words, excluding references) : April 30th, 2019**

The extended abstract should include the research' question and objective, its theoretical frame, methodology, expected results, and contributions.

The abstract should be emailed, without any identification and as a PDF file to : CMS.Ecoles@gmail.com

The following should be put on a separate page : the title of the contribution, authors' affiliations, and the corresponding author' s contacts.

- Decision of the scientific committee : **May 30th, 2019**
- Full text, which should respect the review Management International' s formatting style should be emailed no later that **September 1st, 2019** to CMS.Ecoles@gmail.com.
<http://www.managementinternational.ca/en/authors-section/im-style-guide/>
- Authors who would like to submit their papers to the special issue of the review Management International should email their manuscript no later that **November 30th, 2019** to: CMS.Ecoles@gmail.com

Manuscripts submitted for the special issue will be subject to a double-blind review process. **Participation to the scientific workshop workshop is not a condition to the contribution to the special issue off the review Management International.**

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