



## RESEARCHER'S INDIVIDUALISM: THE MANAGER'S RATIONALITIES IN AFRICA

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### Abstract

The production of knowledge in Management Sciences has traditionally been examined through the lenses of institutional legitimacy, scientific objectivity, and socio-cultural validation. However, emerging psychosocial challenges within universities and research environments call for a critical re-examination of the role of the researcher as an individual actor whose personal values, experiences, and rationalities influence the knowledge creation process. This exploratory article investigates the intersection between the researcher's individualism and managerial rationalities within African contexts. It argues that scientific knowledge is not merely a product of methodological rigour and social validation but is also shaped by the intrinsic ethical orientations, cultural identities, and subjective interpretations of researchers. Drawing on contemporary debates in epistemology, management studies, and African-centred scholarship, the article explores how African researchers negotiate tensions between universal scientific norms and context-specific realities. The discussion further identifies and maps the core values that may characterise African managerial rationalities, including communal responsibility, social solidarity, ethical accountability, cultural authenticity, and developmental commitment. The article concludes that recognising the individual and contextual dimensions of knowledge production strengthens the ethical foundations, practical relevance, and societal responsiveness of management research in Africa. It advocates for a more reflexive and human-centred approach to scientific inquiry that acknowledges the researcher as both a knowledge producer and a culturally embedded social actor.

### Keywords:

*Researcher individualism, managerial rationalities, knowledge production, African epistemology, intrinsic values, ethics, contextual knowledge, Management Sciences*



## Résumé

*La production des connaissances en Sciences de Gestion a traditionnellement été examinée à travers les prismes de la légitimité institutionnelle, de l'objectivité scientifique et de la validation socioculturelle. Toutefois, l'émergence de défis psychosociaux au sein des universités et des environnements de recherche appelle à une réévaluation critique du rôle du chercheur en tant qu'acteur individuel dont les valeurs personnelles, les expériences et les rationalités influencent le processus de production des connaissances. Cet article exploratoire analyse l'intersection entre l'individualisme du chercheur et les rationalités managériales dans les contextes africains. Il soutient que la connaissance scientifique n'est pas uniquement le produit de la rigueur méthodologique et de la validation sociale, mais qu'elle est également façonnée par les orientations éthiques intrinsèques, les identités culturelles et les interprétations subjectives des chercheurs. S'appuyant sur les débats contemporains en épistémologie, en sciences de gestion et dans les approches africanocentrées du savoir, l'article examine la manière dont les chercheurs africains négocient les tensions entre les normes scientifiques universelles et les réalités propres à leurs contextes. L'analyse identifie et cartographie également les principales valeurs susceptibles de caractériser les rationalités managériales africaines, notamment la responsabilité communautaire, la solidarité sociale, la redevabilité éthique, l'authenticité culturelle et l'engagement en faveur du développement. L'article conclut que la reconnaissance des dimensions individuelles et contextuelles de la production des connaissances renforce les fondements éthiques, la pertinence pratique et la réactivité sociale de la recherche en gestion en Afrique. Il plaide pour une approche plus réflexive et centrée sur l'humain de l'investigation scientifique, qui reconnaît le chercheur à la fois comme producteur de savoirs et comme acteur social ancré dans une culture donnée.*

**Mots-clés :** *Individualisme du chercheur, rationalités managériales, production des connaissances, épistémologie africaine, valeurs intrinsèques, éthique, savoir contextualisé, Sciences de Gestion.*

## Introduction\*

The researcher in Management Sciences, the management expert, not to say manager or administrator†(Perez, 2006), is traditionally concerned primarily with "the advancement of the discipline's body of knowledge and the production of results likely to help the manager-practitioner to make decisions, structure their reasoning or exercise their responsibilities. Its research activity therefore unfolds primarily in the world of organizations, whether public or private, local or multinational, for-profit or non-profit"#The discipline in question is fundamentally action-oriented (Rojot, 2003, p. 15), and the constraint of ensuring the usefulness of the knowledge created is paramount (Perez, 2008; Le Moigne, 2007; David, 2004). However, one is always surprised by the focus on the societal sphere, that is, on organizations, when discussing this notion of usefulness. Discussions rarely address the meaning of this usefulness from the perspective of the researcher producing knowledge in Management Science. Yet, considering the adage that "charity begins at home," it is plausible that the latter (the

researcher) might pursue or prioritize their personal desires or values. This possibility makes perfect sense in the theory of research ethics which considers that research cannot be impersonal and that it is always political and committed (Le Goff, 2012; Alvarez and Oriot, 2007; Sole, 2007).

This article aims to argue for the importance of moving beyond questions about the social responsibility of management researchers (Delacour, Fouilloux, and Liarte, 2011) to address the issue of their personal ethics (their "ethos"). This shift is crucial for meeting the ongoing challenge, brought into sharp focus by the structural crises of postmodernity (Marchesnay, 2007), of the actionability of knowledge facing the discipline (Martinet, 2000). We examine the appropriability of knowledge by the researcher who creates it, considering the predominance of systematic references to society in the debate on the actionability of knowledge in management (Reynes, Bartunek, and Daft, 2001). It is possible that researchers may not be able to sustainably accept their social responsibility or be concerned with practicality. §social impact of his knowledge depends on whether he himself benefits from the operational outcomes of his work. Ultimately, this isn't really a question of priority (between the search for the social practicality of knowledge by organizations versus the search for personal practicality by the researcher himself), but rather Adam Smith's "theory of moral sentiments."\*\*\*The year 1956 can also explain it well.

The fundamental idea is, in the face of media coverage of the rise in psychosocial risks, particularly in the West (suicide, depression, burnout, etc.), to focus on university research laboratories. ††to put into perspective the traditional debate on the actionability of managerial knowledge, which is too often focused on the social dimension of this actionability. Suicide can be interpreted in this context as a form of the researcher assuming responsibility towards himself. It reflects, according to Kant's philosophy, this responsibility. †that the latter is more attached to its own values than to those of society (Cassagnabère, 2011). The identified social orientation of the theory on the actionability of knowledge is justified simply by the status enjoyed by organizations as a priority object of investigation for researchers in Management Sciences (Hatchuel, 2001). It stems, it seems to us, from a restriction of the very notion of actionable knowledge. §§which is rather broad. Indeed, it is (actionable knowledge), following Chris Argyris in 1993, "knowledge that is both valid and can be put into action in everyday life" (Avenier, 2005). This fundamental definition, implicitly assigning a universal character to actionable knowledge, does not reveal the justification for interpreting the notions of "valid" and "everyday life" in reference only to organizations, excluding the researcher himself.

Our approach is situated within the framework of reflections that consider the researcher as a recipient of this type of knowledge, which they can appropriate and legitimize (Avenier and Schmitt, 2005). It relies on two complementary analytical frameworks. The first is the theory of research ethics, which posits that research cannot be impersonal and always involves a significant degree of intentionality (Le Goff, 2012; Marchesnay, 2004).

The second framework maintains that actionable knowledge is fundamentally contextual and simply universalizable (David and Hatchuel, 1999). This has given rise to a number of studies that, following constructivism based on the complexity of actionable knowledge (Chanal, Lesca, and Martinet, 1997), seek to assess it through the lens of contingencies such as the type of company (SME, for example), the practitioner, or the consultant (Avenier, 2004).

Moreover, the treatment of context as a theme in the epistemology of research impact in Management Sciences has thus far been carried out without any real consideration for the researcher, at least from an intercultural perspective. The study of the researcher's work in general, and in particular the aspirations or convictions that underlie their decisions, therefore remains of little concern (Sole, 2007), once research is conceived as genuine work carried out within a specific framework, such as the University (Verstraete, 2007). This situation is not unique to Northern countries (USA, Europe, etc.) where the development of Management research took off at the end of the 19th century. It is particularly relevant to Africa, where the beginnings of this research are more recent (Kamdem, 2000). On this continent, where the cultural specificity of both individuals and organizations is championed (Hernandez, 1997), the actionability of managerial knowledge<sup>\*\*\*</sup>This question therefore arises with particular urgency for the researcher (Livian, 2013). Furthermore, it is illustrated by the importance of the recurring local development problems identified (Gaillard and Gaast, 1998). Based on this specificity, we wish to contribute to the debate on the usefulness of scientific research in Africa. This contribution is made by adopting a different, yet complementary, approach to existing specialized works more concerned with social utility. This approach allows us to test the usefulness from the perspective of the genuinely engaged researcher-manager.<sup>†††</sup>African and to identify his own desires and convictions, that is to say, according to Pesqueux (2007), his personal normative resources or his own values according to Deschamps and Finkelstein (2012).

This article is exploratory in nature. Its aim is to contribute to the ongoing debate on the practicality of scientific knowledge, a debate traditionally focused on organizational or societal well-being (Le Moigne, 2007; Avenier and Schmitt, 2005), by focusing on the researcher who produces it. It is structured around two central considerations. First, the challenge of ensuring the impact of research in Management Science is understood within the broader framework of the process of knowledge legitimation that this discipline undergoes (Perez, 2008). This process, by raising the issue of epistemological or methodological choices (positivist/constructivist approach), challenges managers, whether African or not. The second consideration is that the cultural contextualization of the debate on managerial knowledge is a prerequisite for any initiative aimed, in accordance with the humanist philosophy and the theory of ethics of research in Management (Paradas, 2012; Le Goff, 2012), at identifying the values carried by the Manager, even if he is African.

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### **The general framework of the process of legitimizing managerial knowledge**

Since their institutionalization in the West, management sciences have faced criticisms that are ideological, praxeological, and epistemological in nature. Criticisms, concerning the perceived compromise of this discipline by capitalism, its artistic nature, and its positioning within the "soft sciences," challenge managers to ensure the scientific rigor and actionability of the knowledge they produce (Perez, 2008). In addressing these constraints, which must be articulated and relate to questions of "what" and "how" (Schmitt, 2004; Avenier, 2004), a tendency toward the deconstruction of the positivist attitude is observed. Such an attitude is considered detrimental to the production of practical knowledge (Martinet, 2012). We will begin by examining this deconstruction. We then recall that constructivism, as an alternative paradigm, advocated (the "transition to second modernity") for the actionability of knowledge, is imbued with Humanism (Marchesnay, 2008). This alternative paradigm is indeed founded on the principle of the researcher's freedom, which is rarely considered in debates on the impact of research in Management.

### **The deconstruction of positivism for the production of practicable knowledge**

Precisely defining the fundamental logics specific to positivism that structure the deconstruction of the paradigm is a difficult exercise, given their diversity. Research on the practicality of theories (pragmatism) and dedicated to epistemology (Gravitz, 1996; Peret and Seville, 2003; Le Goff, 2012) reveals the recurrence of several major features around which our discussion at this level is structured. These include the postulate of the superiority of confirmation and the principle of objectivity. We therefore address the relationship between positivism and reality, that is, its incompatibility with the project of producing practical knowledge. From this perspective, we demonstrate that methodological positivism is based on positive or objective and empirical logics, considered as criteria of truth, and values the experimental approach (i.e., confirmation) supposedly leading closer to reality. Positive logic, as understood by the "pure and hard" positivism of Auguste Comte of Montpellier in the 19th century, primarily posits the necessity of adhering solely to facts and considering "the reality of reality" or "the naturalness of nature." The rejection of this presupposition, described as ontological, in relation to which knowledge is "knowledge without a knower" (Peret and Séville, 2003), raises the question of the researcher's methodological stance, which must be more detached from their object of research to satisfy the constraint of objectivity. This rejection rests on the idea that the researcher's neutrality, the subject/object independence so lauded by radical positivism, is a utopia or a pure illusion (Brasseur, 2012).

As for empirical logic, it stems from the fact that positivism is a philosophical stance that demands all science be based on observable facts and employ experimental pedagogy. Thus, "Man must base himself on experience," following Francis Bacon in the 17th century, who contributed significantly to positivism (Grawitz, 1996). In this context, experience refers (in Bacon's view) to<sup>sss</sup> to the manipulation and observation of reality in order to test a hypothesis (hypothetico-deductive approach). It can also refer to the

observation of reality through the imagination of the researcher-subject (inductive approach). Induction thus appears as a hallmark of the positivist scientific approach. It presents itself as the only guarantee of the veracity of knowledge and the path best suited to fostering a closer understanding of truth as a universal law. In other words, truth would therefore be constructed by induction, laws being merely the product of "empirical generalizations" (Marchesnay, 2012). Such a conception of truth, however, has been met with fierce opposition from "falsificationists," neopositivists, and critical rationalists, including Karl Popper in the 1930s. For this fervent defender of the principle of refutation in scientific research, as opposed to the principle of confirmation, this was the case.\*\*\*\* Dear to radical positivists, universal or general explanatory statements (theories) can only attain the status of truth if they are falsifiable, that is, if they admit that certain results drawn from observations are likely to refute them (Peret and Seville, 2003).

This critical rationalism à la Popper, highlighting the contingency and evolving nature of truth, has a relationship to theThe actionability of knowledge, if we consider that it finds an epistemological foundation in 18th- and 19th-century American pragmatism (J.S. Mill; G. Bentham; C.S. Peirce; W. James, etc.), thus contributes, like the other aforementioned logics of scientism (a term generally associated with positivism), to attributing a comparative advantage to constructivism in the paradigmatic conflict regarding the production of praxeological research (Charreire and Huault, 2001). At this level, we do not dwell on the complete characterization of constructivism, which has been developed by others (Peret and Séville, 2003; Charreire and Huault, 2001), nor on the debate.++++fueled by the idealization of this "galaxy"####when it is necessary to ensure the actionability of knowledge in Management Sciences (Chanal, Lesca and Martinet, 1997; Avenier, 2004 etc.). It is mainly a question of indicating that the constructivist or neo-positivist negation of the requirement made for the researcher to be detached from reality (Mir and Watson, 2000), as posed by radical positivism, carries a virtue; that of reintroducing Humanism at the heart of reflections on the relevance of research in Management (Markides, 2007).

### **The humanism resulting from the "transition to second modernity"**

Putting knowledge into action presupposes both that the actors to whom it is addressed appropriate it, and this appropriation requires reflexivity on the part of the researcher (Avenier, 2006). This theory implicitly presents, through the requirement of reflexivity, the freedom of the researcher who must "escape" from the "prison of modernism."sssswhere he is forced to seek understanding and explanation of phenomena without influencing them. It justifies, in a certain way, the articulation of Humanism or ethics with the problem of actionability or pragmatism within the framework of weaving together the "three strands of an eternal garland: pragmatic, epistemic, ethical."\*\*\*\*\* Humanism, from its origins in ancient Greece, is indeed founded on the consciousness and autonomy (freedom) of the individual at work (the researcher, in this case), especially when viewed through the lens of critical theory (Heitz, 2013).

Consequently, in research practices, it favors the perception of the researcher as an individual endowed with feelings, emotions, and convictions that they can bring to bear on their work (Paradas, 2012). Studies on the impact of research in management rarely address these feelings to which the researcher may be primarily attached and which define their personal ethics (Chanlat, 2008). They tend to focus on the social responsibility of the researcher (De La Ville and Drevetton, 2010), conceived as being socially embedded.<sup>++++</sup>

### ***The hegemony of the researcher's social responsibility***

Management research, in its praxeological and performative sense, has evolved considerably. It generally agrees on the responsibility incumbent upon the researcher (Walter, 2012). However, the sheer volume of publications, particularly in light of recent financial crises, reveals a strong emphasis on the collective dimension of this responsibility (Delacour, Fouilloux, and Liarte, 2011). In the theory of social responsibility, a theme that encapsulates and illustrates the aforementioned emphasis, the central postulate is that of the social embeddedness of the management researcher, who thus lacks autonomy from the environment, conceived as the sole "optimizer." We will not discuss the relevance of this here.<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup>The difficult duty of the researcher-manager to serve exclusively institutional or social interests (Le Moigne, 2007) is, after all, a guarantee of external legitimacy. The issue of these values is implicitly raised by Kuhn (1983) when he refutes any possibility of dismissing the concept of scientific activity as having autonomy from the environment likely to use the results of the research. It seems more appropriate to explain that the difficulty of this duty finds justification in the theory of "stakeholders" (Freeman, 1984), which generally serves as the foundation for contemporary work on the topic of corporate social responsibility.

The theory under consideration is indeed marked by the extreme fragmentation of what it considers a stakeholder, which can be internal or external. A stakeholder is defined as any individual or group that can affect or be affected by the effectiveness of the company (shareholders, employees, competitors, customers, the state, suppliers, the company, the media, etc.). The diversity of external actors, within the framework of external responsibility that concerns us, raises the question of the unambiguous and precise indicators that researchers should develop to assess the practical impact or feasibility of their work's results (De la Ville and Drevetton, 2010). A better understanding of this concern requires a view of the actors considered, in light of political approaches.<sup>§§§§</sup>, as if defending specific and contradictory values. The social responsibility of the researcher-manager is therefore far from easy to assume and is, in any case, contingent on the conceptual frameworks through which it is approached (De la Ville and Drevetton, 2010). In light of studies identifying the very low actionability of management research (Reynes, Bartunek, and Daft, 2001) for both businesses and society in general, one is tempted to think that it is even an ideal. Among the diverse avenues for improvement explored (Barthelemy, 2012), we have struggled to identify the importance of considering the

individual dimension of the researcher's responsibility from a complementary perspective.

***The inseparable individual dimension of the researcher's responsibility***

"Research is neither impersonal nor detached from the world: it is up to the researcher to remember this." The significance of this paraphrase of Le Goff (2012, p. 290), which addresses research ethics as it stems from Peircean pragmatism, lies in the suggestion that the social and individual dimensions of the researcher's responsibility must be considered simultaneously in reflections on the researcher's work. These dimensions, in reference to work on business ethics (Chanlat, 2008; Pesqueux, 2007), constitute the extremes of the same continuum, namely ethics. The first dimension relates to ethos (social morality) and the second to ethos (personal fantasies). The invitation to address these two aspects of ethics simultaneously stems historically from Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, where he states that "one should make the decision that seems best for oneself and for the city" (Poughon, 2013). In the anthropological approach, where the individual is inseparable from society (Chanlat, 2008), the importance of maintaining a tension between these two extremes is postulated. This tension lies in the researcher's restraint, as they strive to make their knowledge actionable, from falling entirely into either a perpetual quest for the satisfaction of a totalitarian society to ensure its social responsibility, or into individualism aimed solely at fulfilling personal ends (Rouzel, 2002).

In light of the identified logic of hybridization, we focus on the conceptual foundations and justifications of the ethos that defines the researcher's responsibility to themselves. This type of responsibility, rarely addressed in the epistemology of knowledge utility, is more commonly discussed in legal studies in terms of "responsibility to oneself" (Cassagnabère, 2011). It therefore refers to the accounts that the researcher must render to themselves, rather than to society (businesses), and which can include extreme actions such as suicide. Far from refuting the dominant thesis of the social responsibility of managers (Delacour, Fouilloux, and Liarte, 2011; De la Ville and Drevetton, 2010; Le Moigne, 2007), which is itself justified by historicity, this approach is not entirely refuted.\*\*\*\*\* and the strength of the link of his discipline or laboratory with the private and public sectors (Laufer, 2007; Verstraete, 2007), it is a matter of arguing for the development of a research program focused on the individual dimension of the researcher's responsibility in Management.

An exploration of the 18th-century philosophical current that supports scientific relativism allows us to identify positions entirely radical to the contemporary theory of the researcher's social responsibility, which posits that management researchers should only address "the good questions of their community" (Stengers, 1995, p. 14). The emblematic figure of this current, Immanuel Kant, thus considers that "wanting to do good for others is the worst kind of tyranny." This idea is instrumentalized in approaches that aim to demonstrate precisely that ethics always begins with self-questioning (ethos, or ethical egoism) and cannot be reduced solely to institutional injunctions or moral pronouncements (Chanlat, 2008). The researcher's responsibility, therefore, lies first and

foremost with themselves, taking into account their inner state and personal fantasies. The question of the researcher's self-eccentricity, in terms of the actionability of the knowledge they produce, when viewed from this perspective, proves particularly fruitful in works based on humanist, personalist, or individualist paradigms, whose answers seem almost entirely negative (Paradas, 2012). The humanist paradigm refers to philosophy, which, since Immanuel Kant among others, has denounced socio-economic subjugation and the degradation of humankind. The closely related personalist current (Mounier, 1936), by reaffirming the primacy of the individual over collective structures, defends the self-determination of humankind, conceived as being driven by consciousness, intentionality, and the aspiration to give meaning to life.

These considerations, while not far removed from the presuppositions of methodological constructivism, are not epistemologically neutral. Above all, they invite reflection, from an anthropological perspective (Chanlat, 2008), on the human dimension of the researcher by identifying the structuring of their personal ethics (Paradas, 2012) or by representing them as an intentional subject, a bearer of meaning (Alvarez and Oriot, 2007). The researcher is thus freed from a singular way of thinking that would have the actionability of their knowledge, in a context of multiple recipients (Astier, 2007) where the logic of communication is conceived (Avenier and Schmitt, 2005), evaluated exclusively in terms of its externalities. The reticence of discussions on ethics in Management Sciences (Verstraete, 2007) can be attributed to the scarcity of research addressing the researcher's own appropriation of the statements they produce—that is, the evaluation of action-oriented knowledge from their perspective (Astier, 2007). This situation, it seems to us, particularly affects African researchers and helps explain the difficulty of contextualizing the theory of knowledge actionability in Management Sciences. Regardless of one's perspective—researcher-subject or social actors understanding the relevance of management research requires a genuine contextualization of reasoning. Indeed, no one doubts the complexity, relativity, or subjectivity inherent in the notion of "Value," which is fundamental to the definition of actionable knowledge. Only works focused on the social aspect of the researcher's responsibility, however, focus on deconstructing the universality of actionable knowledge, arguing that it "is that which allows us to conceive of singular solutions to contextual problems" (David and Hatchuel, 2007).

### **Contextualizing actionable knowledge**

From this critical perspective, efforts to investigate the contextual nature of actionable knowledge<sup>#####</sup>These studies appear limited. This characteristic is illustrated by the focus on questions related in particular to the production of actionable knowledge for entrepreneurship, strategy, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (Avenier and Schmitt, 2005; Schmitt, 2004). Research on the individual in general, as a dimension of the context, and on the researcher in particular, is rare when addressing the contextual nature of actionable knowledge. The question of the congruence of this knowledge with the researcher is therefore one of the most overlooked, and it is this question that we address, in light of the intercultural paradigm, by identifying the "personal normative

resources" of the African researcher. The importance of this identification, it seems to us, lies in the possibility it offers for understanding the apprehension of actionability from the perspective of the researcher who creates the knowledge.

### **The deconstruction of the universality of actionable knowledge**

The notion of actionable knowledge is primarily developed within the positivist epistemological framework. This positioning helps explain why this type of knowledge remains problematic (Avenier and Schmitt, 2007), particularly with regard to the universal value it holds in the name of the philosophy under consideration. One of the problems posed by classical theory on actionable knowledge lies in its claim that it is a-contextual. This underpins recent investigations centered on constructivist approaches that reconsider the context to acknowledge that actionable knowledge is that which allows for the definition of specific solutions to contextual problems (David and Hatchuel, 2007). The use of the term "reconsider" here stems from the fact that the logic of context was taken into account by Schon and Argyris in 1978, generally considered the pioneering authors on the theme of knowledge actionability in management, when they developed, on an individual basis, the "stated theories" and the "theories in use." These factors explain, in particular, each individual's reluctance to act and learn when they observe a discrepancy between these theories.~~~~~.

The identified perspective of context regeneration provides an opportunity to affirm the complexity and artificiality of each organization or individual, rendering any positivist approach unsuitable (Chanal, Lesca, and Martinet, 1997; Avenier, 2005). Actionable knowledge is therefore necessarily contextual, especially when considering the conditions under which produced knowledge acquires universal value (David, 2004). No universal criterion allows us to determine ex-ante whether a given proposition is actionable knowledge or not (David and Hatchuel, 2007). We can then ask about adapting imported knowledge to the national cultural specificities of the organizations or individuals who comprise them in order to enhance their performance (Hofstede, 1980). However, the theoretical debate on the contextualization of knowledge, viewed through an intercultural lens, remains relatively limited when it comes to its suitability to the cultural values of the researchers who produce it. Thus, calls from researchers to produce knowledge suitable for African (Kamdem, 2000), Russian, Japanese, and other businesses are legion. However, few studies assess this "suitability" of knowledge in relation to what, following Pesqueux (2007), can be described as the personal normative resources of the African researcher-manager.

### **The "normative resources" of the researcher in Management Sciences**

The researcher's normative resources, while serving to construct the idea that they are accountable to themselves (the individual dimension of their responsibility understood as "responsibility to oneself," a concept more developed in legal studies) (Cassagnabère, 2011), are not neutral with regard to the social impact of their work (the social dimension of responsibility). Beyond Adam Smith's heuristic of the invisible hand mentioned above, these resources may be both pro-social and altruistic (Deschamps and Finkelstein, 2012), meaning they can lead the researcher to seek the well-being of businesses, among other

recipients of the knowledge they produce. The aim at this stage of the work is, on the one hand, to define and clarify the significance of the researcher's normative resources, and on the other hand, to undertake the delicate task of mapping them for the specific case of the African manager.

### ***Definition and significance of personal normative resources***

According to Pesqueux (2007), the personal normative resources of the African researcher refer to the values, tendencies, and internal obligations that define their actions and for which no universal constraint provides the key. These correspond to the subject's ethics, which, in business ethics theory, designates each individual's inner sanctuary, their desires, anxieties, values, and convictions that allow them to harmonize with the cosmic order (Chanlat, 2008). These resources can be associated with the subjective parameters that determine the researcher's career or, following Schein's terminology from 1971, with their "career anchors." Furthermore, these are personal values that constitute intrapsychic entities, distinct from sociocultural values, which are most often institutionalized (Deschamps and Finkelstein, 2012).

The works of Bateson and especially Schwartz are among the most influential in the theory of personal values, which can be defined as: concepts or beliefs; relating to desirable ends or behaviors, for oneself but also in reference to the social group; transcending specific situations and having meaning both at home, in the professional environment, and with friends; being the expression of motivations intended to achieve specific objectives such as security, success, power, benevolence, fulfillment, and autonomy; guiding choice and allowing for the evaluation of the behaviors of people or events; relating to "an internal moral compass" or a personal guide for better living (Deschamps and Finkelstein, 2012).

The exhaustive identification of personal values is a difficult exercise, given their diversity. It requires reference to various fields, including psychoanalysis, ergonomics, and sociology, which are still relatively unexplored in research on the work of researchers (Sole, 2007). In subsequent sections, we considered a mapping of the researcher's own or subjective desires and values. The number of these values is obviously smaller. The idea is that taking these values into account is crucial if one is to "aim for another kind of utility" (James, cited by Peret and Girot-Sévville, 2002, p. 328) by transcending traditional theory.\*\*\*\*\*in which the practicability or usefulness of the research is assessed more from the point of view of businesses among other organizations (Markides, 2007).

### ***Attempt to map the normative resources of the African Manager***

The question of the practical utility of scientific research arises with particular urgency in Africa, given the historically concerning effectiveness of local organizations (Lilian, 2002). The adaptation of knowledge from management science, which originated and was systematized in the West, to this context is frequently advocated (Hernandez, 1997; Kamdem, 2000). This adaptation rests on the premise that the cultural values shared by African individuals are specific. However, the implications of this theory remain less developed in epistemology, compared to specializations such as human resource

management and entrepreneurship, at least when considering the individuals constituted by African researchers.

It is possible, based on the preceding discussion, that mastering the values embodied by these individuals is a guarantee of understanding the deficit in the actionability of managerial knowledge (Markides, 2007), as illustrated by the underdevelopment of Africa (Gaillard and Waast, 1988). These values, which reflect a logic of "self-absorption" or individualism (Courpasson and Guedri, 2007), are, however, rarely addressed in this context by being integrated into a genuine research program. They are primarily treated, as elsewhere (Gatignol, 2014; Shapiro, Kirkman, and Courney, 2007), in reference to the academic system or university governance. The mapping attempt, as illustrated in the table below, is based on the idea that the normative resources considered can only be understood and identified through an examination of studies on the academic careers of African researchers. These studies include those by Gioan (2007), Makosso (2006), Quashie (1994), Tolba (1993), and Gaillard and Waast (1988).

**Table 1:** Painting Mapping the normative resources of the African researcher

<b>Type of normative resources</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>personal</b>	
Material	-salary
Psychological	-autonomy -freedom
Social	-sociability -reputation
family	-family stability -reproduction and support of children
Career	-nomination within or outside the University -scientific validity

The presentation of this general framework aims to outline explanations of the subjective factors that determine the careers of African managers. This ambition is important with regard to our project of promoting the assessment of the actionability of knowledge from the perspective of the researchers who create it. When comparing research on the governance of Higher Education and the working conditions of researchers in Africa (Gioan, 2007), this involves not only academic careers but also careers within non-academic organizations. African universities do not operate outside the bounds of universal requirements, including the need to promote the production of scientific research (Gaillard and Waast, 1988). It is clear that, given this requirement, the academic promotion system (based on the well-known "publish or perish" constraint) relies on researchers' ability to regularly produce purely scientific knowledge, the practical application of which to organizations is always questioned (David, 2004). African researchers, in order to advance their academic careers, must therefore "fight," particularly in a context of excessive workloads in supervising students under deplorable teaching conditions (Quashie, 1994), implicitly prioritizing scientific validity over the social applicability of their knowledge. However, the African university is primarily defined by the low level of researchers' salaries, which, although variable from country to

country, contribute to demotivation and explain their involvement in parallel lucrative activities that are sometimes detrimental to scientific production (Makosso, 2006). This situation stems from the historical dependence of academic research on public funding, which has been steadily declining in African countries since the beginning of the 1980s. Above all, it contributes to making financial gain a key argument in the utility function of the African researcher, which, consequently, predisposes them to be entrepreneurs as well (Agulhon, 2006).

The tendency of African researchers to turn away from their professions and move towards political activities, seeking appointments within public administrations outside of universities (Makosso, 2006), or, according to our own observation, to request long-term leaves of absence from their universities to work in international public (IMF, World Bank, UNDP, ministries, etc.) and private organizations<sup>+++++</sup>This illustrates the power of this financial argument. This logic, which poses a common employability problem, is not, however, unique to established researchers (professors) but concerns junior or aspiring researchers as much as doctoral students (Glick, Miller, and Cardinal, 2007), that is, doctoral candidates and young researchers with doctorates (Tolba, 1993). Life in a research laboratory requires significant financial resources, which most doctoral candidates lack, and this situation increases their level of distraction and disengagement, as they become preoccupied with recruitment in private companies (Glick, Miller, and Cardinal, 2007). This theory seems all the more relevant to the case of doctoral candidates in Africa, given that in this context, beyond the aforementioned weakness of public funding, university research laboratories rarely benefit from private funding from companies (Makosso, 2006).

Nevertheless, the stated ambition of doctoral graduates to enter the private sector is traditionally considered wishful thinking, given the theory that African universities, due to the private sector's limited capacity to absorb their graduates, which exacerbates the prevailing unemployment rate, are nothing more than "adult daycare centers" (Tolba, 1993). The specific nature of this sector, dominated by informal activities and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (Hernandez, 1987), inevitably poses recruitment challenges for young African PhDs drawn to the prospect of a career outside academia. Certainly, the problem of unemployment among PhDs is not unique to the African context (Dhoquois, 2011). It also arises in environments with larger companies (Centre d'Analyse Stratégique, 2010).

According to the theory of Glick, Miller, and Cardinal (2007), the intensity of financial and employability problems is likely to vary depending on the researcher's desire for family fulfillment, whether junior or senior. These authors argue that a researcher's academic performance, in terms of scientific output, depends in particular on their marital status, the number of dependent children, and their need for social interaction. Their theory, when considered in light of the paradigm that defines the African enterprise (implicitly the African university) through the model of family and community (Hernandez, 1997), suggests that the pressure to create knowledge that is actionable from a business perspective and/or rigorous (scientific) may constitute a residual problem in relation to

the balance between the quality of social and family life for researchers in Africa. This underpins the still recent reflections in this context on women's academic careers in particular (Kandé, 2014). These reflections show how, by adhering to the logic of motherhood (childbirth, etc.) and sociocultural constraints, including religious requirements, women encounter difficulties in terms of scientific production and academic advancement. Motherhood and piety thus appear, in relation to female researchers, as personal values that are prioritized over the creation of rigorous or socially relevant knowledge.

### **Conclusion and perspectives: towards a political and moral approach to the impact of research in Management Sciences**

The illusion of researcher neutrality, whether in the design and implementation phases or in the analysis and dissemination phases of their work, is the subject of theoretical consensus (Thietart, 2003). However, little research exists on the beliefs or intrinsic parameters that guide the researcher's priorities as an intentional subject (Alvarez and Oriot, 2007) in the production of actionable knowledge. Epistemology of such knowledge reveals the hegemony of approaches that tend to evaluate it from a sociocultural legitimation perspective (Le Moigne, 2007; De La Ville and Drevetton, 2010), which is problematic from the point of view of research ethics theory (Le Goff, 2012). This exploratory article aims to suggest a way of balancing the dominant approaches to the social responsibility of researchers with those intended to ground reflection on the often-overlooked individual dimension of this responsibility. It seeks to present the diverse conceptual frameworks necessary to maintain this tension, identifying the contributions of anthropology and critical or personalist humanist philosophies (Paradas, 2012).

These paradigms reinforce the idea that the researcher's personal normative resources are not neutral in their work. We attempted to map these resources by considering the specific case of the African manager, in order to enrich the debate on the contextuality of actionable knowledge (David and Hatchuel, 2007) with intercultural considerations. The ambition was also to suggest a greater appropriation of the political and moral dimensions characteristic of Management Sciences in research on this type of knowledge. The questions of freedom, subjectivity, emotions, value judgments, and individualism raised by these dimensions are certainly not new in reflections on the work of management researchers (Sole, 2007) and especially on the very nature of Management Sciences conceived as a moral and political discipline (Martinet, 2007). They demonstrate that research work, being inherently personal, is always free and committed and cannot be conceived without the researcher's values; it is worth recalling that science is defined in Karl Polanyi's philosophy of knowledge as "a responsibility of freedom" (Baumard, 2012).

The questions mentioned above are very often marginal, it seems to us, in analyses, especially those concerning university governance in Africa. This observation provides an opportunity to reiterate that our work should be seen as a guidepost to help launch a genuine research program in this context, particularly regarding the challenges of addressing the researcher's tendency to withdraw into themselves or their subjectivity in their work (Courpasson and Guedri, 2007), as well as the mechanisms that local universities design (or should design) for the support and personal development of

researchers. Management Sciences would therefore benefit, as we have shown above, from focusing attention on these issues, which are confirmed by Polanyi's following message (1958, p. 301): "Science... can no longer hope to survive on an island of positive facts, around which the rest of the human heritage sinks under its status of objective emotionalism. It must be affirmed that some emotions are just; and if science can successfully carry out such a claim, then not only will it be able to preserve itself, but also support by its own example the entire system of cultural life of which it forms a part" (Baumard, 2012).

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