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# *Accountability and Bottom of the Pyramid projects: the two sides of the mirror*

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**Résumé:** Cette communication étudie « l'accountability » face aux problématiques RSE. En effet, la société demande aux entreprises d'agir en faveur des grands problèmes sociétaux. Cependant, les entreprises rencontrent des difficultés pour satisfaire à la fois, les demandes sociétales et économiques. Cette relation est analysée par l'exemple des stratégies de la Base de la Pyramide (BoP). Des entretiens ont été menés auprès des managers BoP. Deux sortes « d'accountability » émergent. Elles se différencient sur quatre éléments : leurs rapports à l'objectif sociétal et économique, le niveau où elles prennent place, leur but et les perceptions des groupes qu'elles mettent en mouvement. Ce travail contribue à la théorie néo-institutionnelle, à « l'accountability » en RSE et à la littérature sur la BoP.

**Mots clefs :** Accountability, théories néo-institutionnelle, Base de la Pyramide, RSE

**Abstract:** This article aims to study accountability regarding economic and social issues. Companies are more and more challenged about their actions regarding society. Most of the time, they face some oppositions and need to arbitrate about them. I offer to clarify this relation through the specific example of Base of the Pyramid (BoP) projects, which intend to make profit and reduce poverty. I have conducted interviews with managers in charge of BoP projects in French firms. I have found two distinct ways of accountability. Each of them gives account toward specific objectives and is distinguished through their levels, the main principles and the perception of this project by various audiences. This paper contributes to institutional theory, CSR accountability and BoP literature.

**Key words:** Accountability, Institutional theory, Base of Pyramid, CSR

Since the turn of the new century, big firms do more and more to introduce sustainable development principles within their corporate guidelines. They have explained this phenomenon by the fact that they aim to respond to shareholders' demand, by proposing elements of solution to face main world issues. The field of CSR has been the object of numerous researches in management, dealing with problems caused by objectives, which have nothing in common (Margolis et Walsh 2003). Accounting literature has also provided interesting looks on such objects, highlighting how accounts are given on social and

environmental issues (Owen & O'Dwyer, 2010), toward studies mainly based on sustainable development reports (Gray 2002 ; Adam et McNicholas 2006 ; Gray 2010 ; Archel et al. 2011 ; Belal et Cooper 2011), or called for more committed accountability (Gray, 2002, 2010).

In this paper, I will define accountability as a way of giving accounts in order to render behaviors intelligible (Garfinkel 1967), involving two entities defined at a certain level (Ebrahim 2003). The two identities exchange information in order to clarify their actions (Roberts 1991 ; Schweiker 1993 ; Willmott 1996), and by them adjust their behaviors (Schweiker 1993) to coexist in the same environment. In opposite to many studies in the field of CSR, I will give attention to accountability inside the organization (Roberts et Scapens 1985 ; Munro 1996 ; Willmott 1996) regarding how social objectives implementation influence managers' accountability.

I have chosen to test such questions on a specific field of CSR: Base of the Pyramid (BoP) projects, which are dedicated to creating a market for poor people; that is those who live with less than two dollars a day (Prahalad et Hammond 2002). They have two main objectives: to produce a profit but also to improve living conditions of their consumers (Prahalad 2004 ; Jaiswal 2008). There are two kinds of economical benefits. The first benefit might be derived from new sources of growth through the creation of new markets. (Arnold et Quelch 1998 ; Christensen et Hart. 2002). Secondly, by launching such business programs and communicating these development goals, firms give the appearance of taking care of global ecological and social issues. They shape their own reputations as responsible companies (Prahalad et Hammond 2002 ; Harjula 2007). Arguments from the literature in favor of the improvement of living conditions of poor people take various shapes. First, BoP programs change the perception of these populations generally regarded as impoverished peoples. With these programs they acquire the right to choose what they want to buy (Prahalad 2004). Moreover, in a neo-classic perspective, because of the competition, prices will decrease although quality will improve (Vachani et Smith 2008). Second, some products or services will be designed to answer specific needs regarding social development (Martinet et Payaud 2009). Those new goods will lead to better hygiene, better access to information, a rise of knowledge, and creation of local jobs (Jaiswal 2008). Following the perspective developed by Sen (1999), people will therefore improve their liberties and access to better living conditions.

Most of CSR guidelines are dedicated to stakeholders and take place at the periphery of companies; business strategies are dedicated to shareholders and are the mean to make money. They both have a specific audience to which they give account according to very particular and different demands. Hence, Bop projects bring together these two objectives inside the same program. As I noticed above most of the paper have studied accountability in the field of CSR have discussed this relationship at the organizational level. In this paper I also aim to study how actors involved in CSR project perceive and act for accountability regarding the two goals. I will see if it concerns only external audience. I will see if they give account in the same ways on both aims and toward the same audience. Finally I will highlight reasons of such shapes. Accordingly I will try to bring an answer to the following question:

How does accountability shape in BoP project, regarding both objectives?

In order to answer this question, I will use a qualitative methodology. I have conducted 18 semi directed interviews, in 14 companies in France<sup>1</sup>, where only 15 enterprises started such programs. I have carried out two encodings.

As researches about publics sectors (Broadbent et Laughlin 2003 ; Ezzamel et al. 2007 ; Kober et al. 2007), papers on CSR deal with objectives' duality and show some difficulties not to say contradictions into the management of those. To better understand how actors give account on both objectives of BoP project, I will use institutional theory as framework, since this approach has conceptualized contradiction within organizations through decoupling (Meyer et Rowan 1977). Such contradictions have repercussion on the accountability (Ezzamel et al. 2007). This work aims to contribute to accounting literature dealing in general with social objective, as CSR politics (Cooper et Owen 2007 ; Collier 2008 ; Owen et O'Dwyer 2010), non-profit sector (O'Dwyer 2005 ; Unerman et O'Dwyer 2006 ; O'Dwyer et Unerman 2008), or focused on poverty issues (Walker 2008 ; Jayasinghe et Wickramasinghe 2010). However, those papers, like most of the studies about CSR, takes place at the organizational level, showing accountability between the firm and its stakeholders. There are few works about what happen within the organization when social objectives are introduced; about how managers give accounts around them or about their motivations to do so.

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<sup>1</sup>In the business sphere, the interest of BoP projects is quite new. French companies like others in the world have mostly started such programs after 2005. Group Danone created a joint venture with the Grameen Bank in order to make sale locally produced yogurts by poor Bangladeshi women to poor Bangladeshi children. This strategy have given a lot of publicity in the media and make other companies reacted. Many firms specialized on B to C and well implemented in southern countries started to think about developing their own BoP projects.

In this article, I will demonstrate that according to BoP managers, there are two types of accountability, each of them related to an objective and to a specific audience. At the organizational level, BoP is presented as a solution to answer stakeholders' demands regarding poverty reduction. Companies give account on these issues by creating such programs. In opposite, BoP projects are mainly perceived inside the company as a problem because of the social objective. BoP managers have to demonstrate to their colleagues that BoP projects are accountable to the profit making objective of the company. To address this aims, the article will be presented as the follow. Firstly, Accountability will be defined in order to demonstrate it multiple levels of application regarding strategies developed to gain legitimacy regarding BoP projects. The whole will be highlighted by the help of institutional theory (1). The qualitative methodology will then be exposed in explaining how the data have been collected and analyzed (2). Finally, the empirical study will be developed (3) and the result will be discussed in a concluding discussion (4).

## **1. Gaining legitimacy through accountability**

Accountability is commonly seen as a way involving an organization and groups of actors of its external environment. In such means, the external audience expressed expectations that the organization should answer through a process of giving account. In the field of CSR, a lot of researches have been conducted under this vision of accountability by studying the link between stakeholders' expectations and answers proposed by companies (Gray 2002 ; Collier 2008 ; Gray 2010 ; Owen et O'Dwyer 2010). A lack of efficiency to account for social and environmental aspects for the society welfare has been denounced (Bennington et Gray 2001 ; Cooper et Owen 2007 ; Gray 2010 ; Belal et Cooper 2011). Many papers give attention to CSR reporting as the main tool of accountability to explain firms' actions about environmental and social issues toward stakeholders (Adam et McNicholas 2006 ; Owen et O'Dwyer 2010). Thus they focus to accountability toward external audience. However, accountability is both external and internal (Ebrahim 2003), and then takes place within organization at the individual level as well as the organizational level. Beside, many researches, who have sought to define "accountability" in its general sense, have developed an argumentation at the individual level. Nevertheless, following elements are valid at both levels. This work will try to propose an alternative vision, by seeing way of giving accounts

from Bop's managers in order to study how they deal with internal audience as much as external.

The most commonly accepted example used to define accountability involves a supervisor and his subordinate. The supervisor fixes a mission to his subordinate with objectives that the latter must reach. At the end of the mission, the subordinate gives account about the realization of objectives to his supervisor. In exchange, the supervisor remunerates the subordinate (Dumez 2008). However, scholars admit the concept is much more complex than previously exposed. It refers to various meanings and various relationships (Dumez 2008); It is an elusive concept (Sinclair 1995). For example it has been noticed that more and more individuals give accounts to their colleagues (Munro 1996). There is also confusion about who really define objectives between supervisor and subordinate and when such aims are defined, since the both protagonists meet regularly to define again and together the objectives regarding work done (Dumez 2008). Accordingly, accountability refers to a broader concept which allows comprehension about someone's actions to another person who demands reasons for this specific conduct. The reason for a conduct is given through the first person's justification (Garfinkel 1967). The person makes sense of its action through a "discursive act of saying or writing something about intentions, actions, relations and outcomes to someone" (Schweiker 1993, , p 234). This process takes place in everyday life since people mobilizes accounts to make sense of the world (Willmott 1996) and by then, constructs the social reality of the world (Berger et Luckman 2006). It is a subjective process (Roberts et Scapens 1985). Accordingly, accountability represents the attitudes of others toward us. The origin of this notion may come from the awareness of self, which enables each individual to see himself as an active and responsible subject (I) and not only as an object for other (Me). In other words, the 'I' become in charge of the behavior of the self, 'Me' (Willmott 1996). That phase takes place during the early childhood (Roberts 1991). At this stage, he realizes that he is part of social structures, governed by beliefs, values, rules and he is not alone in such world. Through this process, he becomes aware of others. To communicate with others, he starts account with them. Others by the same process confirm the conscience of himself (Roberts 1991). Thus, giving accounts varies with individual perceptions of the self and others. The possibility of accountability depends on a common framework which permits to render life intelligible and meaningful (Schweiker 1993) to a group of individual. Accountability can also be through under the scope of a contractual relationship between two individuals (Mares 2008) or various organizations . It contains a set

of reciprocal rights and obligations. The latter could change through time, after a redefinition of the set through a negotiation regarding the chain of daily events (Roberts et Scapens 1985) and various entities involved in the process. To clarify accountability, Roberts (1991) has proposed two ways to give account: the socializing forms of accountability and the hierarchical forms of accountability. The first category refers to informal routine, which allows individuals to exchange and understand each other. Knowing these routines, individuals are part of a group. Socializing forms of accountability takes part of the process of identity construction (Willmott 1996). In opposite, hierarchical forms are constructed under a relationship of allegiance, involving protection (e.g a wage) but also domination among various protagonists. The latter issue has been the purpose of numerous researches in the fields of accounting describing a moral order and a system of domination (Messner 2009) (Shearer 2002).

To sum this work up, I define accountability as a mean involving two entities defined at a certain level. The two entities exchange information in order to clarify their own actions. They adjust their behaviors and expectations regarding their perceptions of others, define themselves and by them coexist in the same environment.

Dialogue with external or internal audiences trying to create BoP legitimacy goes through accountability by responding to them demands. This legitimacy should reflect both objectives of BoP projects, which are composed by various set of principles. The social aim is dedicated to “do well” by reducing poverty. It is influenced by ethics values, whereas the economic goal highlights principles of market, whose purpose is to make profit. Such principles seem coming from very different spheres and appear in contradiction. Contradictions are common in the fields of organizations studies (Friedland et Alford 1991), and most of time they are resolved through a mechanism called “decoupling” (Meyer et Rowan 1977). The latter exposes that inside organizations, institutional rules are neither uniform nor consistent: they rife with contradictions. However to survive organization should negotiated between contradictions in order to appear stable and legitimate (Hirsch et Berniss 2009). This concept of decoupling has been used to explain contradictions between objectives in studies about public management (Brignall et Modell 2000), with some especially about accountability (Ezzamel et al. 2007). Thereof, I will use institutional theory to better understand the perception of accountability in the specific case of Bop.

In institutional theory, sets of principles which can be grouped together under a common conception refer to the concept of institutional logics (Thornton et Ocasio 2008). More precisely there are “the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space and provide meaning to their social reality.” (Thornton et Ocasio 2008, , p 101), or “the beliefs systems that furnish guideline for practical actions” (Rao et al. 2003, , p 795-796) and help therefore actors to behave (Friedland et Alford 1991). It will help to think both sets of believes carry by our two objectives of BoP: market principles reflected in the economical goal and ethics principles linked with poverty reduction reflected in the social goal. This concept is linked with various assumptions, which will be helpful to understand our case (Thornton et Ocasio 2008). First, there is the idea of inter-institutional system. It reflects the fact that the society cannot be perceived as an homogenous set of principles, well established (Thornton et Ocasio 2008). Thus the society is thought as “composed of diverse subfields, which are characterized by distinct norms, values, and rationalities.” (Hasse et Krücken 2008). These subfields carry sometime, some competing principles, which could per se contradict to each other and create conflicts. Second the embedded agency exposes that “the interests identities values and assumptions of individual and organization are embedded within prevailing institutional logics” (Thornton et Ocasio 2008). It links micro to macro echelons, and helps to think the dynamics of institutions through various levels in order to understand how principles connect individuals to organizational fields and the other way around. Finally, institutional logics provide to social actors vocabulary, motives and identity (Lok 2010) through sets of principles, which help them to develop strategies of conviction, to direct their actions (Lok 2010) and produce discourses they need to introduce change toward institutional fields (Phillips et al. 2004).

Moreover, the idea of BoP project is quite new. The per se condition of the success of such project is reaching both objectives. This task falls to managers in charge of the development of such projects to convince audiences about it relevance. Accordingly, the BoP project is considered as something that should gain legitimacy since it is not taken-for-granted. They need to create a state where BoP is pensive as “desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman 1995, , p 574). Thus I am studying a process of legitimation, or in other words, a tempt of construction of an institution, called most often institutionalization (Suchman 1995, , p 576). Scott defined it “as the social by which individuals come to accept a shared definition of social reality”(1987). Its dynamics has been thought under three different steps which are



creation, maintaining and destruction of an institution (Lawrence et Suddaby 2006). The institution which is about here is the “*the potential success of the BoP project through both its objectives*”. As I have before presented, I would assimilate the legitimacy of the BoP project to the creation of an institution. However, it is quite impossible to notice the difference between the creation of an institution from the change of one at the beginning of the process (Scott 2007). As it can be assimilate at CSR project, it can be a mutation of perception of such programs and by them a change about companies’ purposes. To avoid this problem I will concentrate on the institutional work, defined as actors actions toward institutionalization or deinstitutionalization processes (Lawrence et Suddaby 2006 ; Lawrence et al. 2009) dedicated to the legitimacy, present in the discourses of the actors and in their acts, in order to transmit the new definition of the social reality (Zucker 1991). This institutional work, at the beginning of the process of institutionalization or in the change of the process, is mainly hold by those who want reach the legitimacy for a larger audience than just specialists of it. In institutional theory, they are called institutional entrepreneurs and have been defined as “actors who create, modify or destroy” old institutions because they access news resources that allow them to support their self interests, which are in contradiction to the existing institutions (DiMaggio 1988 ; Lawrence et Suddaby 2006 ; Hardy et Maguire 2008). In our case, they are those who are in charge of the development of the BoP projects. To success in their mission, they need to make believe that such projects can be profitable to shareholders and their representatives and they could bring development to stakeholders interested by the problem of world development. They need to develop specific strategy to create an new environment which creates good conditions to enact the change (Thornton et Ocasio 2008). It has been observed that institutional entrepreneurs could work from the center of the environment (Suddaby et Greenwood 2005) but in other time the change could come from the periphery of the environment (Maguire et al. 2004). Those concepts allow us to treat the question at the micro level in order to understand accountability within the organization in terms of exchanges between individuals.

However, the purpose of this study is to highlight accountability regarding BoP in it global forms and not only at the micro level. It allows us to bring conclusion at the organizational levels too. This legitimacy is the purpose of a set of organizations, ones which have launched, or are willing to launch such BoP projects. It involves companies who are heeding attention to poverty reduction and propose to face it with a common market design. I qualify this set of reproduced actions a mimetic effect (Meyer et Rowan 1977). Through this

and according to the definition given by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) which defines “organization field [...] [as] those organizations that in aggregate constitute a recognition area of institutional life : key suppliers, resources and product consumers, regulatory agencies and other organizations that produce similar services and products”, I consider that firms which started BoP programs might be involved in a common organizational field. It helps to treat accountability at the macro level.

In our cases, both aims of BoP projects reflect two embedded institutional logics, which help to link both levels. Accordingly, from projects holders to the organizations fields, the two institutional logics should be seen and utilized toward accountability to reach legitimacy. It might also be observed some competing logics as a consequence (Thornton et Ocasio 2008, p., p 118) of various principles driven under the two objectives. These competing logics might be used to create two discourses in order to legitimate the efficiency of the two goals of the BoP projects as decoupling theory has proposed (Meyer et Rowan 1977). It is in this double process that the notion of accountability comes in, to help the justification of the development of such programs.

## **2. Methodology**

This study has been conducted to understand characteristics of accountability regarding big French companies launching BoP programs. The empirical data collection took place from January 2010 to September 2010. Fifteen firms, included in the French stock exchange index CAC 40<sup>2</sup>, have been listed as developing such programs or about to starting one. Precursor companies started BoP programs in 2005<sup>3</sup>. As this study is motivated to understand discourses developed by managers in charge of BoP programs in firms in order to understand attempts of accountability regarding the two objectives, qualitative methods have been used to find the argumentation developed by them. More precisely the perception of the managers has been used to understand how accountability is shaped as much as within as outside the organization since those managers are in contact and under pressures of both audiences. In order to obtain interviews from all companies interested I got in touch with a

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<sup>2</sup> Only La Poste. does not take part of the index. The firm has been included because, it shares many characteristics with others. Moreover it has been a public company (for mail) for more than 50 years. It just became a private company. I emphasize that the main various point from the rest of the set comes from this recent change.

<sup>3</sup> Danone and Essilor International

professional association, whose goal is to make companies interested in BoP more dynamic. The latter proposed to introduce myself to their network. Of the fifteen firms, only one has not answered our proposition. In the fourteen others, interviews with one or two persons have been conducted. I met either the manager in charge of this program, if he did exist, or the CSR director. These interviews took place averaged one hour apiece. They were face to face<sup>4</sup> semi-structured interviews, which are recognized to make emerge social construction of account (Qu et Dumay 2011). The meetings were conducted as a conversation. The importance has been given to the global comprehension of the process. I specially turned my to the way the program started and the reasons for it, any encountered problems (and their solutions), and the relation between objectives. The interviews followed three phases; I explained the causes and the purpose of the meeting in terms of management and acceptance. At the beginning, I let the manager spoke. He explained conversationally the content of the BoP program for his company. He was free to develop every point that seemed important to him. Afterwards, and only as determined by myself, additional questions were asked to clarify any aspect exposed by the manager. No definition of accountability has been presented. The term was not even given by me or manager, since there is not exact translation toward a unique word in French<sup>5</sup>. Yet the concept appeared at a second stage through managers discourses (Ayache 2008).

*[Insert Table 1 : Timing characteristics of the interviews]*

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. After each interview, I wrote my impressions and important elements about the environment, about the atmosphere of the meeting and about my personal feelings which could alter the interview, in my research logbook (Nadin et Cassell 2006). I will then consider semi-structured interviews and the content of the logbook as primary sources.

In parallel to this data collection, paper clipping, sustainable development reports and journal article were compiled to better understand the global context and therefore better corroborated interpretations. Sustainable development reports have been put in this category on purpose, since they only are dedicated to external audience, and therefore often used for studies, which highlight accountability only between companies and stakeholders.

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<sup>4</sup> On the firms. panel, Groupe Danone had a special place, because we studied one of its base of the pyramid strategy for our master thesis. Data used in this explorative study have collected in five interviews but also by two phases of observation: One in headquarter, where the researcher used to be an internet; the other on the field, where the project is developed.

<sup>5</sup> The equivalent is “given some accounts”(rendre des comptes), which has not been used.

The data analysis has been made under two steps. A first global reading has been made to make emerge the main topic which could characterize accountability on BoP objectives programs regarding the managers' discourses. Each interview has been read three times each. From it, some main categories emerged, which qualify accountability between various sets of actors and the two objectives (reasons of launch/ met problems). Some different time aspects through those relations have also been noticed. Data has been reorganized through this timing. From those categories a second reading has been made to join specific quotes to categories. Finally links from these various categories have been established. I qualify this encoding as the inductive one. After this first encoding, a second one has been realized with the help of concepts from institutional theory. The second encoding helped to deeper understand the characteristics of accountability regarding both objectives. Both encodings, and then their crossing in a second stage allowed dissertations and re-organization of the original transcripts and notes from the logbook around the key themes. The whole enhanced to explain the phenomenon I would like to study.

### **3. Empirical study**

Accountability regarding BoP projects involves various types of characteristics as links with objectives, type of actors involved, levels (individual versus organizational), kind of institutional logics involved... I will describe these types of connections regarding their nature, and their temporality. Firstly, I will expose how BoP projects are seen as a means to be accountable to outside audience (3.1). Second, I will present the difficulties met by BoP project manager to convince inside the firm and the strategies they have developed to show they are accountable to the organization's aim and through that how BoP projects gain legitimacy inside (3.2). Finally, I will expose the feeling of the managers according to what it is not enough to demonstrate accountability in long run. That is why they wish for the development of accounting tools in order to bring proofs regarding objectives realizations (3.3).

### 3.1. A mean to be accountable toward stakeholders

#### 3.1.1. Descriptions of the organizational fields

BoP is described as specific CSR project, since they involve a will to take into account the issue of poverty reduction. “Most of the people think we should absolutely do something” explained one of the BoP managers. This program is perceived as a new way to answer stakeholders’ demands. It is in fact the main argument that the managers have exposed when I asked about the interest of starting such ambitious project. They have quoted various types of stakeholders. From one interview to another, the same set of stakeholders is presented, with various degrees of influence. I present them according to the importance given to them by BoP project’s managers, regarding accountability. Some seem to have a special role for motivating firms to start. Hence, BoP projects seems especially build to responds to local authorities to demonstrate the firm’s responsibility in local territories. Thus one of BoP manager explained:

“[...] on one hand, we are been more and more requested by our local colleague to bring solutions; Not only from North, but also from southern countries. As soon as we have paid our taxes, our royalties, in such countries as Angola, Nigeria; Of course we do so, but we are more and more asked by local authorities who tell us “So, you don’t want to help us, here the purchasing power for our populations is very low, Help us to find a solution!”<sup>6</sup>

Local government lobby to make companies share their profits by developing programs, which contribute to improve living conditions of poor people. On one hand they ask for jobs creation, but one the other hand they require to provide same services or goods to the whole population, whatever the purchasing power of households. This aspect is more present in managers’ discourses from ex-French public companies, like France Telecom, GDF Suez, La Poste, Veolia Environment. They have explained that their culture, based on the equalitarian treatment of every citizen, which are now considerate as consumers, do not allow then to avoid from a specific good.

“We are in a situation, where we carry a solution regarding a common good, which is drinking water and where our French culture of public services

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<sup>6</sup> [...]on de plus en plus sollicité par l’ensemble des collaborateurs locaux pour apporter des solutions, non pas simplement au pays du Nord mais également aux pays du sud, mais une fois qu’on a payé nos taxes nos royalties nos impôts dans les pays comme l’Angola où le Nigeria, bien sur on le fait, mais on est plus en plus sollicité par les autorités locales pour dire, mais bon, « vous voulez pas nous aider nous, là où on est, contenu du pouvoir d’achats des populations à nous aider à trouver une solution ».

imposes to us to do not make a water for rich people and another water, less drinkable for poor people”<sup>7</sup>

Managers have explained that they are accountable to local populations too, even if they do not speak about pressures this time. The latter is easy to understand since these poor populations are less powered. They provide some “adapted solutions” according to their perceptions of local demands and needs.

“About micro-insurance, we leave traditional patterns. We have an approach, which is much closer to people’s needs. We ask people about their expectations.”<sup>8</sup>

Managers talk also about another set of stakeholders, which comes from northern hemisphere this time. This set does not ask for a direct contribution for their own problems like local government and local population, but they request more ethical behavior from companies. It brings together three different groups. The first entity makes the link between northern and southern groups, since on one hand its aim is to advocate for improvement of living conditions of people, mainly from developing countries; and on the other hand, most of the time they have been created in North. I am talking about NGO in particular and activists in general. They are an important force of pressure regarding CSR behaviors of companies since they are presented as the most challenging representatives. Even if the pressure from them, about poverty reduction is nowadays quite low, BoP programs are perceived as a solution to prevent such pressures by some managers.

“Activists have changed many things and thanks there are here. The challenge nowadays, it is Aids. Tomorrow I think it will be and with good reasons, diabetes, cardiovascular illness [...]. “Your drug”, they will say “your last drugs to fight cancer, you sale them at a prohibitive price to poorest patients. What are you doing for that?” I feel that it logical that we are asked for this.”<sup>9</sup>

Other managers have explained that the traditional relationship between Ngo and enterprises has been very confrontational, since a long time. Yet, because companies have

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<sup>7</sup> Nous ont vient avec notre culture de la délégation de service publique c'est-à-dire de service publique rendue, donc on arrive en disant ce qui faut faire c'est selon nous, ça [heu...] avec notre idée[heu...] francophone du, du[heu...] l'eau, [heu...] l'eau potable pour tous et non pas une eau pour les riches et une eau moins potable pour les plus pauvres.

<sup>8</sup> « [...] son objectif correspond à ce qu'on cherche à faire en termes de micro-assurance, c'est-à-dire, on sort des schémas traditionnels, heu, on a une approche qui est beaucoup plus centré sur le besoin de la population. En interrogeant la population elle-même, que plus telle qu'on les définis aujourd'hui. »

<sup>9</sup> Les activistes, moi je dits ça de façon très positives, les activistes ont beaucoup changé les choses et heureusement qu'il y en a. Ce qui se passionne aujourd'hui. Le défi aujourd'hui c'est le Sida, le machin, demain, je pense que ça va être, et à juste titre, le diabète, les maladies cardiovasculaires et puis ce qui va nous pendre au nez et c'est normale, c'est l'accès à l'innovation. Vos médicaments, on va dire vos derniers médicaments sur le cancer, [heu] vous les vendez à des prix complètement inabordables pour les patients les plus pauvres qu'est ce que vous faites pour ça.

shown an interest for poverty reduction, but also probably because Ngo's success to bring development solutions has been criticized regarding results, the conflict has been reduced. BoP projects allow collaborative actions between both organizations. Most of the time, firms who start BoP projects ask Ngo for partnership to do so. They have explained they need such actors because they know much better poor consumers. They are very helpful to build a adapted design. In compensation Ngo provides advices that help greatly in the construction and the development of the social aims. They can also supervises the local firms works and prevent risks for population.

“We are out of traditional frames, out of the classical concept, to create something between corporate (as it has been explained by some manufacturers) and local government and NGO, with partnership with NGO. Ten years ago, we could not imagine what we have done, because as usually we have really been got us hard with NGO, but now they are our partner”.<sup>10</sup>

Managers have talked also about responsible consumers, who are attracted by firms, who have shown ethical behaviors when they shop. Few years ago, some firms have known some boycotts from consumers after showing none ethical practices (e.g. Nike for making shoes by Children or Nesley for it incitement campaign for baby powder milk in Africa). Organizations are trying to avoid such. According to managers, today some consumers want more than just avoiding bad behavior, they want companies who take care of world main issues. Developing BoP projects seem an appropriate answer to that demand as they tried to treat all consumers the same way and providing products and services to improve development.

“[...] a second angle [to convince], which is our consumers, our regular consumers, B to C, who are asking for a sustainable approach. Hence we should answer to that demand”<sup>11</sup>

Finally, the last group, which appears from the discourses, is employees. They are not those who have high position, but middle managers or workers. Youth seems especially motivated by the project. The latter helps to hire young managers from best colleges. It seems that this demands from wages-earners, has not been perceived at the beginning.

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<sup>10</sup> On sort des cadres habituelles, heu, de la la du concept classique, pour créer des choses dans avec des grands corporates comme l'expliquait certain industriel avec des collectivités locales, avec des ONG s, avec des partenariats avec des ONG, y a dix ans, on n'aurait pas pu imaginer tout ce qu'on a fait, parce que bon on à l'habitude de s'en prendre plein la gueule avec les ONG et puis là, c'est des partenaires.

<sup>11</sup> Et un deuxième angle d'attaque qui est [heu] nos clients, nos clients au sens business du B to C, demandent que l'on ait une approche sociétale. Donc il faut qu'on réponde à ces questions

“we have notice an high reaction inside the firm from our employees. [...] I was myself well affected to see all messages I have get. Today, every-week, one or two persons, at least contact me inside the company to tell me “it is great what you are doing”<sup>12</sup>.

However, through these discourses very few exchanges between firms and other stakeholders appear. They do not talk with precise proofs of this demand, more about taken-for-granted gossips. It seems that companies start to build such strategies from its own idea of what the outside audience is expected.

### *3.1.2. Dominant logics of the argumentation proces: “doing well”.*

All discourses about the set of stakeholders are dominated by utilization of vocabulary related to “do something” to improve living conditions of poor people, to expressed the firms will to “do good things”. The whole argumentation is therefore built on the realization of the social objective. It is carried by principles of ethical field, which I refer to institutional logics.

“It is absolutely necessary that we find solution to those [poor] people, and all in along providing to them a service. We should take care of this people, but through a different way. Our fear it to take care of them on the fringes.”<sup>13</sup>

To demonstrate their proximity to such, BoP managers have explained that this expectation from external demands is also something that they understand and they share, not only as individuals but also as organizations composed of individuals.

“Of course, we want to do good things, because like others, we are motivated by same impulses than everyone, so if we can do good things, we are gladly going to do good things.”<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, this demand about poverty reduction is much older than the BoP projects. To be accountable on it, firms used to answer through philanthropy practices by financing directly Ngo or more often by developing their own programs through their foundations. Nonetheless, they saw a better way to fight this issue with BoP programs, since they fell more efficient by developing and providing adapted products or services to the local demand, than giving money, which seems far from their global aims and abilities.

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<sup>12</sup> « on a constaté une forte réaction en interne de la part de nos salariés [...].J'étais personnellement très touché de voir les messages que je recevais, aujourd'hui, chaque semaine j'ai au moins une ou deux personnes qui me contact en interne en me disant c'est génial ce que vous faite, [...]»<sup>12</sup>

<sup>13</sup> « il faut absolument que l'on trouve des solutions vis-à vis de ces personnes, tout en leur rendant un service, c'est prendre en charge ces personnes, mais les prendre en charge diffèremment et la crainte, c.est qu'on les prennent en charge en marge... »

<sup>14</sup> Bien sur on veut faire des choses bien parce que on est comme tout le monde et on, et ce qui nous motive dans la vie ce sont les même ressorts que tout un chacun, donc si on peut faire, si on peut faire des choses bien ben on va les faire très très volontiers



“From outside, drugs industries are seen as rich companies. So people come to ask free medicine. We, what we say is that through this medicine we can give more than just money, we can provide our expertise”<sup>15</sup>

### 3.1.3. Specificity of the relation: BoP as a mean of accountability

According to BoP managers discourses, these projects have been built in order to answer a demand expressed by a set of stakeholders, especially those, who come from south. Most of managers refer to same groups. Hence, I have noticed there is a special organizational field which is constructed around the program.

There is another particular aspect of manager talk about answering the external demand through BoP projects. When they talk about such, they seldom use “I”, or refer to personal implication, but prefer “we”. In other word they identify themselves to the organization, and speak for it. This type of discourse is therefore organizational speeches. Hence I considerate that this relation of accountability takes part at the organizational filed level. However it induces another type of relation, which takes place in the individual level.

## **3.2. A project, perceived as unrealistic or in interesting for the inside point of view of the company**

If the BoP project is presented as a way for the firm to answer an external demand, it is not easy to convince managers within the company about the efficiency of it. In other words, if BoP projects are perceived as a solution of accountability to external audience, it is more a problem within companies. In fact BoP managers have explained to us, their difficulties to convince, either executives comity members or high managers that these projects contribute to the realization of firms’ aims. To demonstrate the efficiency of such programs, they developed an argumentation.

### *3.2.1. Argumentation developed by BoP Managers*

One of the most important problems according to managers is to convince decision-makers within the companies to start such projects, and especially those related to financial department. Most of them do not see the link with firm’s objectives: making profit in order to pay dividend to shareholders. They do not see the advantages that such projects could bring to

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<sup>15</sup> « les firmes pharmaceutiques sont vues d’un point de vue extérieurs comme des firmes riches donc les gens viennent nous taper à la porte pour qu’on donne des médicaments et nous ce qu’on dit avec ce médicaments c’est qu’à travers ce médicament on a mieux à donner que de l’argent, c’est notre expertise. »

firms. They are not really convinced by the fact that one can earn money by doing business with poor consumers. It is truer for firms which are starting to develop business in emerging countries like China, Brazil or India, where there is high potential for growth only with upper classes. It is less true for Banks, since the efficiency micro-credit has been demonstrated, through the Grameen Bank experience. Moreover, they sometime perceive BoP projects only through the social objective and consider that a firm's job is not to resolve such issue. Hence, BoP managers exposed to me that took time to launch the program because of that. To do so, they explained, they need to be very persevering to make believe that BoP projects could bring few competitive advantages.

“It took me years to be listed”<sup>16</sup>

“They are not ready inside the company. First it is hard of them (chairman) to get the problem”<sup>17</sup>

It is a process, where BoP managers need to convince one manager after another. Most of the time, they target as much as possible people with influence in order to make the message spread over the company and to increase decision makers awareness of it. As soon as the CCO or a few members of the executive comity carry the project, it can be started more easily. Yet, they do not need to have the whole company behind them, but as much as managers, who occupy strategic positions within the organization to be sure than the program could get enough resources.

« X approached me, [...], he asked me [...], if everything was going well with my work; and I told him « Yes, more and less, for example the micro-insurance project, we have not really succeeded in launching it; we need you [...] you just have to tell you colleague Y, chairman of Z-France you are really interested in this project and you believe in it, etc. It's going to work! » [...] a few months later indeed, I had officially learned that the project had been signed [...]. »<sup>18</sup>

“On one hand, we are fragile but on the other hand, there is a memento as the other said so, what I mean, in the company we do not catch critical mass, but

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<sup>16</sup> « J'ai mis des années avant d'être entendu »

<sup>17</sup> « c'est pas mure en interne, déjà ils ont du mal à prendre conscience du problème. »

<sup>18</sup> « Y s'approche de moi, [...], il me demande [...], si les dossiers avancement bien ; et je lui dis « oui, plus ou moins, mais par exemple le dossier de micro-assurance, on n'arrive pas vraiment à démarrer, et on a besoin de toi. « Il suffit que tu dises, heu, ton collègue et X, président de B France que tu es vraiment intéressé par ce dossier de micro-assurance et que tu y crois, ect, ça va marcher » [...] quelques mois après effectivement, j'ai appris officiellement que le dossier [...] était signé. »

we reach various step of management, people who have realized why the group shouldn't avoid such issues".<sup>19</sup>

When they spoke about these aspects they have talked about individual to individual relationship. More often, they use the pronoun, "I" and describe their personal activities and strategy to convince. They insist on efforts they provide. Hence, in opposite to the previous relations between BoP project and accountability, this one takes place at the individual level. BoP managers are those who express the necessity to change the connection between the organization and poor populations by including them in the firms' global business strategy as consumers.

### *3.2.2. Arguments developed in order to demonstrate that BoP projects are conformed to firm's objectives of market*

The BoP managers' argumentation is dedicated to convince the audience within the company. It is built to show that this program could help the firm to serve shareholders' aim and helps to make profits. BoP managers link their discourses with many market principles in order to seem credible to their interlocutors. Thus they present themselves in line with managers and high managers' objectives, working for the same firm.

"I tried to be rational in this process and not being all the time in emotions. [...] we need to be rational. [...] It is welfare, but firm's welfare and I try to avoid emotional welfare".<sup>20</sup>

"We should be in-phase with business. We should bring additional aspects, but we should not be on the fringes."<sup>21</sup>

They use therefore many words related to business lexical fields as risk, profit or competitive advantages to legitimate the BoP program. In opposite, social aspects, which were very much often used, when they were talking about external demand are almost vanished. The institutional logic of business has succeeded to the one of ethic.

There are three different types of arguments which are exposed. The first one is directly related to do business. It goes back on Prahalad's (2004) arguments according to what there are growth margins on the market of the poor, but on the long run.

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<sup>19</sup> « On est à la fois fragile et en même temps, y a un memento comme dirait l'autre, c'est-à-dire que, le groupe, on attend non pas la masse critique mais on atteints différents échelons du management des gens qui ont réalisé pourquoi le groupe ne pouvait pas se désintéresser de ces questions, de ces sujets là. »

<sup>20</sup> « j'avais essayé de remettre de la rationalité là dedans et d'éviter que l'on soit toujours dans l'émotionnel. [...] C'était toujours du social mais du social d'entreprise et j'ai essayer de sortir toujours le social émotionnel. »

<sup>21</sup> « On doit être en phase avec le business. On doit lui apporter des éléments mais on ne doit pas être à la marge. »

“[...] we are number one in world market. So we do have a market share, which is equal to 25 or 30 % and our strategy is to keep such position in 2050 or even after. It is necessary that we keep at least the same market share in every country, where we are present today. And, if we stay on the top of the pyramid, it won't work So our approach is not to go down inside the pyramid, taking care of the top and the bottom, but to look after all consumers segmentations. Okay? So it is definitively a business issue, a market share issue. Okay?”<sup>22</sup>

However, this is the less often quoted piece of argumentation or less developed by managers, which it could be surprising according to the early literature. I have even met BoP a manager, who do not believe in it.

In opposite, the argument, which is the most shared by BoP managers, is that BoP strategy helps to build a responsible image of the firm. It is the business version of being accountable to stakeholders as I explained it in the previous part. According to managers it reduces risks and helps to gain or preserve market shares. BoP managers from companies, who sale mass market products have referred to consumers from north countries.

“The idea is to show that your kid [you, occidental consumer], he gets the same yogurt pot than the one from Bangladesh, who lives in a shanty made with sheets metal.”<sup>23</sup>

In opposite, for firms who sale to public sectors and compete for governmental licenses like France Telecom, Veolia environment, GDF-Suez, BoP managers have explained that they have developed their argumentation regarding local authorities' demands from South.

“In many African countries, we have an very important economical impact, there are some countries, where we represent 10 % of the GDP. We cannot ignore social impacts, when they do exist. We might receive bad press, which can through us out of the country, one day to another”<sup>24</sup>

Finally, they are also some managers who used both in their argumentation.

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<sup>22</sup> « Seulement le soucis c'est qu'on est numéro 1 mondiale, donc on a une part de marché qui est de l'ordre de 25 à 30% sur le plan mondial et que donc notre stratégie c'est de garder cette position mondial en 2050 ou au-delà, il faut bien évidemment qu'on ai dans chaque pays une part de marché qui soit au moins équivalente à notre part de marché moyenne mondiale et donc si on reste sur le haut de la pyramide ça n'ira pas, donc notre première approche c'est pas seulement de descendre la Pyramide du haut et du bas sans s'occuper du milieu mais c'est s'occuper de l'ensemble des segments de la pyramide, [...] d'accord . Donc et ça c'est essentiel, c'est vraiment une problématique business, une problématique de part de marché, d'accord »

<sup>23</sup> « L'idée c'était de montrer que ton gamin, il a le même yaourt que le gamin du Bangladesh qui vit dans une cabane en tôles »

<sup>24</sup> « [...] dans beaucoup de pays Africain on a de façon connu un impact économique énorme, c'est à dire on représente y a des pays où on représente facilement 10 % du produit intérieur brut. On peut pas passer à coté des impacts sociaux qu'on a et y a eu, il peut y avoir de mauvaises presse qui fait que du jour au lendemain, dans ces pays du jour au lendemain, ils nous mettent dehors »

“On the other hand, through that, we are presented we have an access to decision makers as well as North as South. We hope, we will improve drug industry’s image, which is dreadful.”<sup>25</sup>

The last argument, which is exposed, is innovation. In fact, even if managers agree about the fact that is hard to make profit on poor market, they have expressed that they are aware that one day, the competition for market shares will be on the Base of the Pyramid. Hence, in firms they are looking for solutions to be ready for such competitions. They have explained that BoP projects are good innovation labs to learn how to make business with such populations. This last argument moderates the conclusion about the lack of importance given to the first one about business because this latter creates some conditions to gain market shares.

“It enables us to think about new businesses. It is rightfully an innovation lab.”<sup>26</sup>

*[Insert Table 2: Types of arguments summoned by BoP Managers, regarding firms]*

### **3.3. Beyond oral argumentation, a will to build tools to provide written justifications toward the two objectives**

The previous accountability regarding BoP projects refers mostly to past experiences, even if they have explained that not all managers have been convinced of the efficiency of BoP projects nowadays. However, in most company they have found enough partners to get the needed support and resources and started the programs. Yet, if they see the project as mean of accountability, they express their will to limited communication on it, since they do not have specific proof about a positive effect about improvement of local living conditions and the effectiveness of the objective effect. They wish for numbers. Hence, they have explained that now they need to develop tools, in order to bring proofs on the couple of objectives to both audiences to keep rising the legitimacy process. This set of tools is, indeed, demanded by some stakeholders.

“Through these services impacts, we may be more credible, more factual, because there are people, who challenge ourselves”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> « Par contre, a travers ça on est présent, on a accès au décideurs politiques aussi bien au Nord qu'au Sud, on espère qu'on va améliorer l'image de l'industrie pharmaceutique qui est épouvantable »

<sup>26</sup> « ça nous permet de réfléchir à des nouveaux business, ect, c'est vraiment un laboratoire d'innovations »

<sup>27</sup> « Ça sera notamment par l'impact que ces services seront, on pourra nous dans notre discours RSE être plus, plus crédible et plus factuel, parce qu'il y a des gens qui nous challenge »

“So, look at this service, we thought it was dedicated to the poorest people and look at what it was allowed to do, so then, we would improve our external credibility, but also internal credibility; We would have elements of measurement and element of proof”<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, BoP Managers have expressed their confusion toward the development of assessment tools on both objectives. About the economical objective, questions are on the possibility of realization of benefice, but they already have many apparatus to verify if the business is profitable or not. This confusion is therefore stronger about the social objective, which is new for companies. It is not easy to reach it either, but also hard to asset, since there is no common shared method to evaluate social impacts which involves by itself many aspects. In other words, most of the time social objective need to be specify at first, to understand how they improve living conditions for poor people. In fact BoP managers explained the difficulty to think about social impact to a whole. Most of the time there are no anticipated impacts, which could be positive or negative.

“Social assessment: we all have our own idea about what is it. What is the negative impact of [our BoP project]? Is it the rise of the price of tea and that is quite important everyone drink tee; Are fields prices, around the plat point, increasing since there are close from the water point.”<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore it is more complicated since they want quantification. In fact they mainly wish for giving account on how much their BoP projects improve poor living conditions. Nevertheless the social impact involves a sum of qualitative aspects. However the quantification seems, for managers the only way to allow a comparison between both goals.

“Yes the economic objective, [...] there is a break-even point for the number of days per year, years with, years without, the number of glasses per day, etc,. The social objective, it is very difficult to measure it”<sup>30</sup>

“We are aware we need indicators. Among other, we are pushed by those who make index, and all those things, and who ask for numbers, for stuffs. So, we

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<sup>28</sup> « ben voila regarder ce service, on pensait qu'il était à destination des plus pauvres et voila ce qu'il permit de faire et donc là on aura gagné à la fois en crédibilité extérieur et à la fois en crédibilité intérieur, on aura des éléments de mesures et de preuves. »

<sup>29</sup> « L'évaluation sociale on a tous nos idées sur qu'est ce qu'un impact social. Est-ce que c'est l'impact négatif de Grameen Veolia Water, c'est que le prix du thé va augmenter à Goalhari et si c'est ça c'est quand même assez important parce que tout le monde boit du thé, est ce que c'est que c'est que les terrains autour des platepoint vont devenir plus chère, puisqu'ils sont près d'une zone d'eau »

<sup>30</sup> « Oui l'objectif économique, [...] y a un point mort à un nombre de jour par ans, des années avec, des années sans, un nombre de lunettes par jour etc. L'objectif social, il est très difficile à mesurer »

are aware of the interest of such things, but we don't really know where to start.”<sup>31</sup>

“In our CSR politics, we have one, very important about local development, [...] which goes with service propositions, which can achieve this axe. [...] We haven't had a metrical system yet. We know it is essential, but from now we don't know how to quantify. We know how to identify a project which goes under this category, but it more because we saw impacts, but we don't know how to justify them.”<sup>32</sup>

Accordingly, they are a third way to give account on BoP through the development of tools, which is going to bring more proofs and permit to go further for more legitimacy. Regarding interviews the process is not over. This third types of accountability shapes classical accounting since the expected tools will bring quantitative proofs on effectiveness of both objectives. Nonetheless, regarding managers discourses it seems that there will be two various systems, one for the social aim and one other for the economical goal.

#### **4. Concluding discussion**

The previous development has examined the relation between accountability and BoP programs, which have been qualified as business project dedicated to poor consumers; it should improve poverty reduction. Two relationships have been identified, describing two various ways to give accounts. The first one concerns the social objective. It takes place at the organizational level and involves the following entities: the company and a numerous set of stakeholders. The BoP project is considered as a mean to answer the outside demand of poverty reduction. The program by itself brings some elements to show that firms care about poor people's improving living conditions and want to act to reduce it. However, if BoP project is presented as a solution to answer external audience expectations, it brings some problems within companies. In fact, managers and especially financial managers do not believe in the project and more precisely in the achievement of the economical goal. To solve the lake of trust, BoP managers have developed an argumentation to demonstrate that the

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<sup>31</sup> « On est conscient du fait faut qu'on ai des indicateurs, [heu] entre autre on est poussé par les gens qui font des indexes et toutes sorte de machin et qui demandent des chiffres, des trucs, [heu] et donc voila, on est bien conscient des intérêts de faire ça mais on c'est pas trop par quel bout prendre les choses. »

<sup>32</sup> « [...] donc nos axes RSE on a un, on a un axe très important sur le développement économique des territoire qui passent notamment par le, par proposer des services qui vont permettre de, de contribuer à ça [...]a pas, on a pas pour l'instant, on a pas de, on pas encore identifier de métrique précise, [heu] on sait que c.est essentiel, mais pour le moment typiquement on ne sait pas quantifier, on essaie d'identifier un projet qui rentre dans cette catégorie, c.est plus parce qu'on voit les impacts mais on peut pas le justifier par, on anticipe que ça va avoir un impact. »

program is accountable to the aims of company: making a profit. They use three types of arguments to convince about the efficiency of the project: making money in the long run and gaining market shares, improving enterprise's image to reduce risks and using the project as an innovation lab to develop future design dedicated to markets for poor. The first one, is the less often quoted by managers, whereas the literature has previously exposed it as the main argument to start BoP project (Prahalad 2004). This type of accountability takes place at the individual level. To summarize, social aim and economic aim regarding accountability have been thought totally separately.

BoP is presented as a mean of accountability, since BoP managers have exposed organizational arguments to responds to shareholder's demand. It allows defining the organizational field around a project. The predominance of social arguments and human care values in the managers' discourses, when they have talked about the aim of poverty reduction demonstrates the domination of institutional logic of ethic. In opposite, the second type of accountability, when BoP is perceived as a problem, involves BoP managers to convince their colleagues about the efficiency of such projects. It takes place in a specific sub-field of the organizational fields: within the company. This argumentation highlights BoP managers' institutional work. Their actions are dedicated to make accepted this program. Therefore those actors are institutional entrepreneurs. However inside this argumentation, the institutional logic of market is dominant. Thus, even if relationships between accountability and BoP concern the same project, the sharing of both aims regarding audiences demonstrates decoupling. Through managers' discourses, no competition appears between objectives or related logics. They both seem involve in a very specific discourse dedicated to a specific audience at a specific level. The connections between the various levels are therefore weak.

If these two relationships own many differences, both have in common the fact they are build from spoken discourses. Phillips, Laurence and Hardy (2004) explained that institutionalization are made under all kind of discourses, but written discourses are the most important in the process, since they permit a better transition of actions related to institution. However, managers have explained that they now need to build systems which can bring the proof of the realization of both goals. Those accounting systems should bring numbers on both objectives. Numbers appears to managers as the best proofs to show credibility regarding others organization's members. By providing proofs under the shape of numbers or qualitative writing arguments on BoP aims, it could improve the process of legitimacy, which is a chain of various arguments.



Accordingly relationships to legitimacy are different. Through discourses no oppositions have been exposed. The Nature of BoP toward external shareholders might not be justified as soon as the idea of it is presented as a solution to bring organizational legitimacy. BoP projects are a good solution, because they aim to do well. Moreover it fit very well to the first type of legitimacy from Suchman's typology; the pragmatic legitimacy (Suchman 1995, , p 578), which is motivated to answer immediately a demand without proofs. The second stage that this author exposed is moral legitimacy (Suchman 1995, , p 579). It has been defined to demonstrate conformity to values and norms through evaluation. In the previous case, it is under reflection. Nevertheless, to be completely conformed to this definition sets of proofs are still necessary. The process is still ongoing, thus it is too early to talk about cognitive legitimacy , in which is based on support through taken-for granted aspects. Moreover to check the effectiveness of this aspect it will be necessary to interviews set of stakeholders. Representatives, after that the organization had bring proofs.

For the second relationship it is quite hard to qualify the legitimacy process, since this concept of legitimacy has mostly been studied at the organizational level, to conceptualize organizations behaviors in order to appear adapted to external audience's expectations. In 2008, Deephouse and Suchman, called for research at various level, notably within the organizations. This paper contributes to this gap since my results, legitimacy gaining process at the individual levels is carried by BoP managers' project, which have been identity as institutional entrepreneurs. Within the organization they have met with resistance based on doubts regarding the achievement of the economical goal. To face and get over these oppositions, BoP managers have developed an argumentation, whose aim is to give account of the efficiency of BoP projects on making money. To demonstrate such success, managers wish for number, in order to give account with accepted elements' regarding companies' believes. Regarding Roberts' classification, it fits well with social forms of accountability. The latter finding demonstrate that accountability regarding CSR is not only a question of answering shareholders demands, but also issues of providing accounts toward various managers, whatever they are colleges or supervisors (Roberts 1996). It is also an internal process (Ebrahim 2003), which involves actors discourses and actions in order to advocate the development of their programs and change organizational vision regarding poverty reduction in particular and social issues in general.

This paper has several limits. Firstly, if existence of organizational accountability regarding CSR have been shown, more information about the process of construction of such

argumentation to legitimate the implementation of social objective will be interesting to study. For example research with deep involvement in the field (e.g ethnographic methodology) to describe the building process through practices and discourses will be interesting to have. Secondly, the method of investigation is limited by the type of actors which have been interviewed. The relationship is a one way process. As exposed earlier and maybe when the process will be brought forward, it might be interesting to asked stakeholders quoted by managers about their feelings about accountability. About the economical objectives too, it would be interesting to have the opinion of others managers, that BoP managers are trying to convince, in order to understand why they do not believe in it and then why they have been convinced or not by BoP managers' argumentation. Finally one type of stakeholder is missing: stockholders. Knowing their opinion about BoP projects and what are their expectation from it, would enrich our knowledge. Finally, another originality of this project is the fact that it studes an ongoing process and bring precise elements about steps of construction. Then, it will be interesting to study how the process evolves. The latter will especially be interesting to focus on the social objective, which seems to bring many problems to BoP managers, in order to contribute to CSR accounting literature. Finally, the construction of tools, choices made around them and them consequences about assessment might bring some clues to understand the evolution of the BoP project accountability. A look should be also given to the relationship between objectives in order to see if the stay both in well excluded spheres.

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### Annexes:

Tables 1: Timings characteristics of the interviews

Firms	Nbr of people	Length
Danone	2 (+3)	00 :45 / 00 :40
Veolia	2	00 :38 / 00 :53
Schneider-Electric	1	00 :55
Essilor	1	1 :06
Total	1	00 :51
GDF-Suez	1	00 :48
Sanofi-Aventis	1	00 : 57
Orange	2	1 :22
AXA	1	1 :05
Société Générale	1	1 :40
BNP-Paribas	2	00 :53
Crédit-Agricole	1	00 :57
Lafarge	1 <sup>33</sup>	
La Poste	1	1:02

<sup>33</sup> The manager refused to be recorded

Table 2: Types of arguments summoned by BoP managers, regarding firms

Firms	Gain market shares	Innovation	Image toward South	Image toward North
Danone	✓	✓		✓
Veolia		✓	✓	
Schneider-Electric		✓		
Essilor	✓			
Total			✓	
GDF-Suez		✓	✓	
Sanofi-Aventis		✓	✓	✓
Orange			✓	
AXA	✓		✓	
Société Générale	✓			
BNP-Paribas	✓			✓
Crédit-Agricole				✓
Lafarge	✓			
La Poste			None	✓