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## Going forward with the history of French management models and practices

Muriel Le Roux, Eric Godelier, Gilles Garel, Albert David

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**Dr. Muriel Le Roux**, Senior researcher, CNRS-ENS, France

**Dr. Eric Godelier**, Professor of Management and Business History and Chair of the Humanities and Social Sciences Department, École Polytechnique, Paris, France

**Dr. Gilles Garel**, Senior Professor, CNAM, France

**Dr. Albert David**, Senior Professor, Paris Dauphine University, France

## **WORLD BUSINESS HISTORY CONFERENCE 2014**

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### ***GOING FORWARD WITH THE HISTORY OF FRENCH MANAGEMENT MODELS AND PRACTICES***

Since the 1990s, the historical, intellectual and political context has proved to be a powerful catalyst favouring a reflection on the position and concepts behind management in western societies, particularly in Europe and France. It has to be acknowledged that the manager in his current state claims to be capable of organising all collective action, in short, all communal social life. Aided by certain political parties and supported by ideologies wary of the hazards of social life or democracy, it is understandable that management, and some of its denigrators, aspire with efficiency as their objective to replace debates and political methods. After promoting his experience and his knowledge of « real » civic life in the United States, the company manager offers to come to the assistance of politicians in France, who in his eyes are entangled in seemingly futile and costly quarrels. Accordingly, a vast number of actors rely on management and administration in their economic, social and political projects. As a result, they more or less deliberately blur the possibilities of vigorously analysing this controversial subject. So at the end of the day, this boils down to one question: does managerial thought exist? This question was used as the cornerstone of a 5 years project published in 2011 on the web site<sup>1</sup>. This Program has proved that there is a managerial way of thinking (I). But the aim of this paper is to settle a new step toward a better understanding of the status and elements of French management model and practices after the 19th century (II).

Two targets are aimed: first, an intellectual synthesis of the work accumulated thanks to the PPF; second, the design of a methodological and epistemological frame which will enabled business historians and social scientists to develop a scientific program to study at last in a distanced posture the field of management. Management, at least in terms of its academic component, sees itself reduced here to a form of rhetoric, a doctrine, or even an ideology intended to legitimize dominative practices or the capitalist economic system. Studying management even from a distance means that some, such as the classical social sciences, risk granting the capitalist system recognition. For others on the other hand, the managers or the academic environments within management, any objective and critical analysis would be inconvenient because, above all, management must serve in the interest of businesses. However, it must be acknowledged that the history of management techniques and managerial models is well paced by what historians call revolutions and scansions. Such a process creates periods marked by the domination of certain practices or by representations following the example of the different industrial revolutions. Reflecting on the stages of

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<sup>1</sup> This Website is an interactive and pluridisciplinary book. It presents the works of a PPF (Plan Pluriannuel de Formation) on the French managerial practices and ways of thinking (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries). <http://mtpf.mlab-innovation.net/en/introduction.html>

management and its evolution should contribute to specifying the temporalities and the modes of passing from the proto-industrial firm to the modern capitalistic firm.

The idea is to contribute to previous debates whilst adopting a pragmatic and empirical approach with two simple questions as a starting point: what do these managers do and what does the field of management cover? (III)

One could evidently discuss the ideological or economical orientation of the consequences of managers' actions. One could justifiably highlight that this shaping of collective action existed well before the big businesses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, a new category of individuals called itself 'managers' or 'administrators'. Then the time came to analyse practices and teaching. Step by step, a new discipline fought for its legitimacy alongside the first social sciences, economics, sociology, and political sciences. New teaching and learning institutions appeared, lessons were organised, and demand increased for teaching positions within this field. An administrative language emerged, either opposing or relying on economy, law or diverse techniques and practices of administration (accountancy, finance, commerce, payroll management...). Eventually, a field of research, along with knowledge and humans settled into the social, economical and political sector of the contemporary world. Yet despite this, they remain an object of research which is still insufficiently studied by history. Subsequently, the way in which they were received by the economic, political and academic environment in France and abroad needed to be assessed. The cultural and geographical origins of the models as well as the knowledge and practices used in France were rapidly called into question. The question of how to translate and to adapt to the local context immediately followed. Responding to these points should contribute to the generic question of how administrative practices are culturally shaped, when faced with certain people's universalist ambitions to render techniques and models applicable to all kinds of businesses or economic, political or social contexts. Pursuing this issue further allows us, for example, to understand the resistance of the French context or German management to Anglo-Saxon, or more precisely American, management. How do we develop this project from a methodological point of view? (IV)

## **I BACK TO THE FUTURE: A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE PAST PROGRAM.**

Do managers think? Is management simply an ideology? What should we teach future managers? How has this increasingly dominative new social group constructed itself over time? How have the scientific and positivist ambitions of management in France developed? These are some of the questions, which inspired this multiannual training programme published in 2011. Others were addressed to the project's steering committee, stemming either from established social sciences, or from university administrative sciences.

### **1.1. Yes they could**

One must start the research by giving an initial definition of management. In the first place, management is a field of human activity which simultaneously regroups a collection of doctrines and theories ó in other words, a way of thinking ó practices, technologies and tools. Almost immediately a first set of problems confront the researcher, the practitioner or the teacher. What is the aim of managerial thought? What is the relationship between practices and ways of thinking? As other disciplines such as sociology of work and ergonomics have already provided answers to such questions, one need only apply them to management. From this point of view, the journey of management and its first actors is enlightening. It is often believed that management originates from the economic and cultural Anglo-Saxon world.

This would explain some of the current managerial representations and practices. However this does not correspond to historical reality.

The term *management* is presented since 1970 in the dictionary *Le Grand Robert* and in most current thesauruses as an Anglicism. The 1862 *Robert* defines the manager as the general agent or the steward of a mine. Aside from the possible Italian origins (*maneggiare*: manoeuvre, conduct, handle), the term undoubtedly also has an English origin (let us not forget that to manage has two principle meanings: 1) to direct, govern, reign and 2) to succeed in doing something, to manage (*débrouiller* in French) to do, with an emphasis on being able to make another do something, later defined by the notion of mandate). This said, it also has French origins. The terms *ménager*, *management*, are presumed to have passed in transit to England and the United States and returned to France in the 1950s. *Ménager* appeared in France somewhere between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, signifying to arrange, to organise one's affairs with care. The term *Ménagement* emerged around the 16<sup>th</sup> century, referring to leadership, administration. It is only in the course of the 1950s that the word spread itself around France in the business sectors with strong American connotations (before, one spoke of direction, organisation, and administration). The *Académie Française* adopted the term in 1969 with a French pronunciation, and the *JO* defined it in 1973 as the methods and techniques of directing, organising and administrating an affair, a business or a sector of activity. Alongside the terms *ménager* or *ménagère* a new idea emerged: that of a person who looks after goods, entrusted inheritances, turning them into good accounts or at least preserving them. The meaning of *handling* people at work, including its modern sense which undoubtedly arrived along with the exportation of the word to the United States, still remained undiscovered.

It was H. Fayol who defined the concepts in the modern sense in 1916. Even if he did not use the term, he determined the boundaries by defining the foundations of the classical managerial functions of an organisation: to plan, organise, direct and control. Thus, we can see at least in terms of vocabulary, that there is a French influence on management. Many of the contributions to this work highlight the influences of France on management abroad or, on the other hand, the adaptation of foreign concepts or techniques to the French context. These have already been highlighted elsewhere<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, other contributions emphasise the specificities of *French-style* managerial ways of thinking and practices. The idea of organising humans and structures pursues its course.

Without a doubt, never in France or in Europe has management as a way of thinking and organising collective and social action had so much success: management of the family, of education, of the State, of personal relations, of sexuality and much more. Every aspect of individual and communal life, of life within society, seems to need to be studied, evaluated and improved by the grids and the tools of the business world. Specialising in the organisation of collective action and decision, the manager comes across as an expert capable of improving any kind of organisation. As a field of expertise which is based on practical experience or scientific grounding, management offers effective and legitimate theoretical and practical knowledge to all. This was the core question which drove the researchers in the previous five years program.

In the eyes of the classical disciplines of thought (philosophy, humanities), the answer is almost final: a managerial way of thinking does not exist because the actors, the aims or the methods are too much a part of the research into useful and operational plans of action. Only abstract fields of discipline as well as out of context and useless knowledge qualify as ways of thinking. Management, at least in terms of its academic component, sees itself reduced here to a form of rhetoric, a doctrine, or even an ideology intended to legitimize dominative practices or the capitalist economic system. As an example, the much older disciplines such as history or sociology question management's scientific ambition by highlighting the weakness of its

methodological system, of its critical apparatus and of the results put forward. Finally, the promoters of management, particularly Anglo-Saxons, are criticised for their desire to develop technologies or practices with a universal vocation, which would be applicable in their current form to any cultural, political or economical context. In this respect, from the public's point of view, the consultants represent a form of social arrogance or of technological and cultural imperialism<sup>3</sup>. Studying management even from a distance means that some, such as the classical social sciences, risk granting the capitalist system recognition. For others on the other hand, the managers or the academic environments within management, any objective and critical analysis would be inconvenient because, above all, management must serve in the interest of businesses. However, it must be acknowledged that the history of management techniques and managerial models is well-paced by what historians call revolutions and evolutions. Such a process creates periods marked by the domination of certain practices or by representations following the example of the different industrial revolutions. Reflecting on the stages of management and its evolution should contribute to specifying the temporalities and the modes of passing from the proto-industrial firm to the modern capitalistic firm.

Essentially, management can be seen as the ultimate science of capitalism, the bearer of modernity, perceived to be a dehumanisation of social and human relations. In short, the vehicle for another step towards an increasingly artificial world, another stage in what Kant sees as characterising modernity, that is, the separation of modern man's obligation to exist from that of having to exist<sup>4</sup>. It is true that by defining organisational sciences as project and artificial. H. Simon seems to confirm this criticism as well as emphasising the ideological basis of management. Conceived aside from all cultural social or historical constraints, management could therefore act universally to improve human organisations. According to some, it appears to have been part of human activities from the pyramids to our modern organisations<sup>5</sup>. In short, is not management just the final step towards transforming social relations between humans and communities into new kinds of relations, which would bring together 'rationalised man-objects' and rationalising men (managers engineers)? The human affect, the disorderly creations or innovations or the uncontrolled social connections are perceived in this context as hazards to be mastered.

The dehumanization of humans or managers or managed or would end up transforming them, as Jean-Pierre Le Goff puts it, into 'human eiderdowns', smoothly controllable by themselves or by others<sup>6</sup>. It is in this context that the concept of the PPF was born. The idea was to contribute to previous debates whilst adopting a pragmatic and empirical approach with two simple questions as a starting point: what do these managers do and what does the field of management cover?

A typical definition sees management as an activity, which plans and sees through collective actions. In short, echoing F. Braudel's excellent definition, the role of managers is firstly to valorise the assets of others<sup>7</sup>. However, it also relies on the learning and the putting into practice of technical and practical knowledge, both of which undoubtedly have in common the idea of speaking in order to do something or to make something be done. After all, one of the central tasks of the manager or whatever his rank or is to diagnose and to express problems in order to shape them into rules of organisation or into effective procedures.

One could evidently discuss the ideological or economical orientation of the consequences of managers' actions. One could justifiably highlight that this shaping of collective action existed well before the big businesses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One could object that other fields of human activity preoccupied themselves with the organisation of collective action or work, such as politics, agriculture, the first States or the Church. Nevertheless, the fact remains that at one point and place in modern history or in the decade of 1970 in England or a new way of observing and analysing human activity emerged. Consequently, a new category of

individuals called itself 'managers' or 'administrators'. Then the time came to analyse practices and teaching. Step by step, a new discipline fought for its legitimacy alongside the first social sciences, economics, sociology, and political sciences. New teaching and learning institutions appeared, lessons were organised, and demand increased for teaching positions within this field. An administrative language emerged, either opposing or relying on economy, law or diverse techniques and practices of administration (accountancy, finance, commerce, payroll management...). Eventually, a field of research, along with knowledge and humans settled into the social, economical and political sector of the contemporary world. Yet despite this, they remain an object of research which is still insufficiently studied by history.

One of the tasks which the animators of the PPF assigned to themselves was to initiate a systematic study of such knowledge, of the techniques or ways of acquiring information, of the places where it can be gained, without forgetting the way in which it is assessed and diffused. Obviously, the XIXth century is a turning point for someone who pretend to study the invention and diffusion of management in Capitalist societies. Most of them were Western or even European countries.

## **1.2 Management : A Western and European modo born in the XIXth century ?**

It was initially in 19th century Great Britain that this new way of describing and organising the World began to be systematized. Yet, as J. Piaget says when discussing the emergence of logical thought in the child's mind, to organise the World<sup>8</sup>, a measuring device is needed. The PPF offered to lay the groundwork for a study on how this new way of thinking 'and not just the practices' was established. In effect, questions of organisation and administration existed well before their conceptualisation.

Subsequently, new problems gradually arose: how would this new field of practice and knowledge deal with older questions concerning the organisation of the collective actions and institutions which sustained them? How would it renew the focus on subjects that have already been studied for a long time by older scientific disciplines and practices, also dealing with organisation and the efficiency of collective action (hard science for example)? How would it find its place in the development of social sciences which is subject to change from one day to the next? In a different but complementary way, how would language and administrative preoccupations enter into debates and practices? In return, the way in which they were received by the economic, political and academic environment in France and abroad needed to be assessed. The cultural and geographical origins of the models as well as the knowledge and practices used in France were rapidly called into question. The question of how to translate and to adapt to the local context immediately followed. Responding to these points should contribute to the generic question of how administrative practices are culturally shaped, when faced with certain people's universalist ambitions to render techniques and models applicable to all kinds of businesses or economic, political or social contexts. Pursuing this issue further allows us, for example, to understand the resistance of the French context or German management to Anglo-Saxon, or more precisely American, management. In such conditions, the bias underlined in the previous PPF aimed to the greatest possible extent to include in the study of the diffusion and the adaptation of managerial models and techniques a detour. Even if it is merely a small one, this detour allows us to bypass the history of cultures and imperialisms. How does one then go about dealing with the entirety of these issues or at least confront the first concerns?

Beginning with the practical side, the actors, then the first teachers in what was then still called the science of business and organisation, have since attempted to promote the local and the singular to the level of general knowledge. It is this course that needs to be located and pursued. The history of discourses and practices, of ambiguities and tensions should

enable the construction of successive indicators along the winding and forked path followed by this field. This epistemological and methodological choice seems interesting in two ways. For social science, history is part of the laboratory that constitutes the World. In terms of management, history allows a reflexive return to managerial practices and a reconstruction of how the managerial way of thinking may have existed. Historical perspective presents us with three possibilities. Firstly, the possibility of analysing practices for what they are, even before the emergence of a managerial thought which is conscious of itself. Secondly, that of understanding how the managerial way of thinking was constructed from practices, and what kind of complex relationships were maintained by these two fields. Finally, that of studying the construction and the possible diffusion of the local and national managerial models. From this point of view, the PPF was a first attempt simply because no other work has of yet enquired into the history of managerial thought and practices in France.

## II FIRST RESULTS AND DEAD ENDS:

What characterises the history of managerial thinking is the existence of a large number of sources for the ideas and doctrines of this field. This renders the task of the researcher delicate but also fascinating in terms of the multitude of sources, actors and disciplines that are available for analysis and investigation. A first inventory of all sources in France has distinguished five different objects to be studied: **1) The history of business, of the State and of public managers.** Studying the birth of a distanced and generalised managerial way of thinking is unavoidably linked to studying the development of a business as an organised and money-making entity. The previous program has underlined this kind of analysis must also take into account the principles and the practices of managerial doctrines which are born into the sphere of public action. **2) The history of private managers.** An initial question has served as a basis: why, following the industrial revolution in the West, did a group of actors decide to campaign for a new social identity with a new name: administrator/ manager? In his last piece of work, F. Braudel had suggested a general definition for these first administrators or managers<sup>9</sup>: they were both administrators of others' capital (as well as their own) and organisers of businesses. Although this definition helps to make some progress, it immediately calls into consideration the sociological aspects of the managerial way of thinking. Yet it is through the important position occupied by the engineer in the production of managerial knowledge that France distinguishes itself. So, what then are the sociological foundations of managerial thought? Several parts of a still incomplete answer enable us to take steps forward. Like other groups elsewhere or belonging to other time periods, this specific social group decided at certain moments in history to come together and to present itself with a particular identity. As Sinclair describes in *Babbit*, the manager attempts to distinguish himself through his way of life and his social and doctrinal representations, both in regards to the workers and the big managers or the business owners. Like the Rubber Barons scorned by the WASP on the Eastern coast of the United States and vilified by public opinion, he frequents and develops institutions which reproduce his value and his culture at the risk of resembling an upstart. **3) The history at the disposition of managerial discourse.** Following the example of other ways of thinking, studying management necessitates an analysis of the way in which it expresses itself in spoken or written speeches. As an example, the history of the economic planning of Shell<sup>11</sup> had an important impact on strategic planning theories<sup>12</sup>. However, it is also essential to take an interest in researcher's and consultant's views about management. These stories are not history. Above all, such speeches are instrumental for managerial conviction purposes. They are witnesses to the objectification process of managerial knowledge. Some examples of this will be given in this book. **4) The history of techniques or managerial tools.** It is impossible

to reduce the concept of management to solely the construction and application of tools or techniques. One must therefore take into account the fact that the managerial way of thinking aims to define and to put into practice techniques and tools presumed to be effective in collective action. This often constitutes a starting point for those aiming to transfer practices to clients or to other sectors of the economy, in other words to generalise. As a result, uncovering the history of this technology gradually leads to an investigation of the actors and the discourses, which shape the search for recognition. Yet one must be wary of making impulsive and systematic generalisations. **5) The history of managerial or administrative disciplines.** Understanding the managerial way of thinking means comprehending how this field constructed itself and how it gradually organised the production and diffusion of knowledge, particularly in the academic world. From this perspective, the PPF presents a fragmented view of the administrative disciplines in France (marketing, HRM, finance...). Research into these questions already exists in France and elsewhere<sup>14</sup>. Management is a discipline which is a lot younger than economics, formed from as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In France, management individualised and established itself as a discipline taught in business schools at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and more specifically at the end of the 1950s and then in universities in the 1970s. These multiple sources do not facilitate the study of the potential existence of a way of thinking in management. In itself, this question is cause for debate and has been debated on during the workings of the PPF.

### **III FROM PRACTICES TO THEORIES: THE HISTORY OF MANAGERIAL THOUGHT AND PRACTICES**

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, managerial theory has gradually been established in order to solve practical problems<sup>15</sup>. The history of managerial ways of thinking can therefore also be defined as the history of theories which were created from managerial practices. The practices are defined as the elements which make up a community of thought and action in response to the problems encountered in and by organisations. These practices can constitute in themselves a cooperative culture<sup>16</sup>. We could therefore put forward the idea that management is characterised by a particular form of epistemological division between theory and practice. In this case, the production of the theories, that is to say the formulation of the general terms (which surpass a specific context) and the recurrent terms (valid at different moments in time) cannot be disassociated from the practices. It is therefore necessary to also study the stages and the content of this generalisation process even if some of its elements are already well-known.

#### **3.1 Practices and praxeology**

Concrete problems or mere actions do not create a managerial way of thinking: it is when they are analysed, put into perspective through researchers' and practitioners' debates, that history is made. For some researchers, the existence of administrative practices, which do not produce discourses and theories, denies the existence of managerial thinking. Generally speaking, the study by practitioners of administrative practices without analysis, without the adoption of a historical stance and without the production of discourses and theories can never establish a managerial way of thinking. The managerial way of thinking only systematically emerged when practitioners like Taylor and Fayol induced administrative theories based on their own experiences at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, they produced discourses, which were sufficiently general and recurrent to surpass the context and the cases, which created them, and to be widely diffused. A managerial way of thinking implies a capacity to conceptualise, to progress from the practical to the theoretical, and to be named



science, technology or praxeology. However, administration has been practiced for a long time on the field. The layout of religious abbeys in the Middle Ages, the workshops of Egyptian potters or the bureaucracy of Mandarin Chinese make use of administrative practices.

If we consider management as a historical subject, we can hypothesise that its institutionalisation called for several conditions:

- it needed to adopt, as A. Hatchuel explains, ða universalist vision of businesses in societyö ;
- to surpass specificities and its sector-based origins,
- to construct institutions which allowed for the formation and the diffusion of administrative models: industrialistsø networks, researchers, consultants, schools and universities where public authorities act as means of diffusion and capitalisation of managerial models and also participate in the normalisation, the formation and the standardisation of tools, vocabulary, functions, organisations and practices;
- to install firms, which were, considered to put into practice effective solutions or accurate managerial thoughts as ideal reference points.

From these details ensues the decision in this study to deny management an ontological or universal status, transforming areas of knowledge and practices into a field which has existed since the beginning of time<sup>17</sup>. We refute the idea that the managerial function is part of ðmanø essenceö, as a natural function. The historical perspective demonstrates, on the contrary, that management has had to overcome reticence, particularly employersø to gain recognition in its modern form, but also, that the managerial way of thinking has not always existed. Methodologically and scientifically speaking, this repeatedly forces the researcher to ðre-contextualizeö the managerial way of thinking and its practices. If the PPF program proposed some improvements, much is still to be organized.

### **3.2 Organisations and businesses**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, first in the United Kingdom, then in France and the United States, managers rapidly established a set of practices and ideas ó a way of thinking - intended to deal with a specific issue: organisation. What distinguishes this new type of organisation from other structures or institutions, organised to shape the activity and the work of other human groups such as the tribe, the Churches or the State, remains to be seen. As a doctrine and later a field founded on scientific ambitions, management has based itself on the hypothetical existence of an ontological unity of organisational phenomena. Recently, authors such as J. G March have highlighted the existence of continuity in the nature of organisations depending on the era and place. A heavy industry or medium-sized construction business, a consultancy firm, a major military state, a hospital, a university, an accounting or IT department are human institutions in which plans are devised according to a goal to be achieved. As a result, from an intellectual or even a practical point of view, the concepts identified by a researcher when studying a public organisation can help to understand a private investment decision. Even if numerous elements militate in favour of this parallel, both practically speaking and in terms of theoretical analysis, this point is worth reconsidering from a historical perspective. Nevertheless, this approach raises many difficulties.

Putting forward the hypothesis of a homogenous field of thought or even practice has encouraged some researchers have pondered over the possible existence of characteristics common to all organisations. It could also resolve some of the methodological difficulties regarding the boundaries of the field under study or the ways of observing and analysing organisations over time. Thus defined by a coherent and delimited subject, the managerial way of thinking and its practices could gradually be shaped by history. It is possible to specify what the common characteristics might be:

- Division of the tasks and roles (translated in concrete terms as more or less formal procedures of work)
- Authoritative system
- Communicative and coordinating system
- Contributing / retributive system of organisation members
- Values and a culture common to different organisation members

The organisation is definable as a social form which, by the enforcement of a rule and under the authority of leaders, ensures the cooperation of individuals on a common piece of work, determining its implementation and distributing the results. In administration, we would say that an organisation is a system which coordinates finalised actions subjected to an exterior judgment and to performance constraints. Concerned essentially with business as a particular form of organisation, one has therefore to extend its gaze to the State. This is also because of the strong influence of private businesses, which tends to be forgotten by some. Managerial models for human resources or accounting have journeyed between these two spheres. Directors or managers have been fired and taken on again in one way or another, bringing with them their own ways of doing and thinking or aspects of the technical, economical or organisational cultures of the institutions, which previously employed. Unfortunately, this attitude to research, despite the potential wealth it presents, calls into question the intellectual and practical 'business/organisation' boundaries. Furthermore, this also explains why the current practices, supported by certain political parties or networks of influence, see the managerial way of thinking as potentially extending its aims and plans beyond the boundaries of business. After all, as certain authors of this book prove, many hesitate between two hypotheses: either we regard business as an organisation like any other, or, on the contrary, as a specific organisation. In favour of this second hypothesis are the following elements:

- Businesses are always equipped with a formal system (from Barnard to Mintzberg).
- The quest for performance,
- Businesses as generators of stress: the quest for performance.
- The specific aims (convergence, divergence, displacement),
- The interchangeability of their members (businesses survive despite and thanks to interchangeability). The previous program showed that the study of management practices, models and thoughts needs a innovative methodology. Often, it imposes a detour to epistemology either to question the possibility of importating scientific concepts or technics from other disciplines, or a evaluation of the nature and type of Relationship to be designed with sciences dealing with entreprise, organizations, economic history and of course people invloved in business practices and activities ie sociology. Of course, this list is unfinished and shall be completed.

#### **IV A STEP FORWARD FOR METHODOLOGY**

In terms of management, history allows a reflexive return to managerial practices and a reconstruction of how the managerial way of thinking may have existed. Historical perspective presents us with three possibilities. Firstly, the possibility of analysing practices for what they are, even before the emergence of a managerial thought which is conscious of itself. Secondly, that of understanding how the managerial way of thinking was constructed from practices, and what kind of complex relationships were maintained by these two fields. Finally, that of studying the construction and the possible diffusion of the local and national managerial models.

We already mentioned some of the most important sources to be digged in France:

1) The history of business, of the State and of public managers. 2) The history of private managers. 3) The history at the disposition of managerial discourse. 4) The history of techniques or managerial tools. 5) The history of managerial or administrative disciplines.

One way of going forward is to use some concepts invented by the management sciences, to analyse the historical sources and archives. The second way is, going back to the past, to try to find the historical context, institutions and social networks which enabled a new management model or tools to be designed, developed and diffused. In both cases, some examples will help to clarify the research path.

A good exemple in the first way could be found through the concept of innovation. Most of management theories and practices are directly inspired by a traditional Schumpeterian model. Looking into the various sources of business history with this frame could lead to many errors and bias. The latest researches on innovation have demonstrated that the "dominant design" concept could help to understand certain types of research and innovation but not all of them. The idea of "disruptive innovation" could be fruitful to go deeper into the study of business strategies, corporations' innovation capabilities or companies' structures and market changes. Some interesting studies have already been published using this kind of intellectual frame.<sup>3</sup> This could impose a closer dialogue between History and management sciences through methodological dialogues<sup>4</sup>. By bringing theory into history, it could create a dialogue throughout history between management sciences and history.

The second approach could also be very interesting. By going backward, such a scientific approach would be able to interrogate the management models, tools and practices. The final target should be a critical point of view of concepts in business and management studies. Two examples would be useful. For instance, one can explore some myth of management. In 2009, B. Cheffins and S. Bank reopen the debate around Berle and Means model so frequently used in finance<sup>5</sup>. They studied the birth and diffusion of the so well known model. Confronting the model commentators with the historical context, the empirical data used at the time and the results they showed how some of the conclusions were pure ideology or at least wrong. Another example could be used about Education in management. R. Lauffer explained how the question of defining management has become a crucial topic in Harvard but also in many business schools around the world. Law courses and jurisprudence played a central role in this history. This history enlightens the present debates on management frontiers<sup>6</sup>. A. David, at the 2013 Business History Conference, presented such a genealogical approach using Peter Drucker's process of invention of Management by Objectives and Self

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<sup>2</sup> One can read several books on this concept : A. Schumpeter, *Business cycles. A theoretical, historical and statistical analysis of capitalist process*, New York and London, Mac Graw Hill book, 1939; W. J. Abernathy and K.B. Clark, « Innovation : Mapping the Winds of Creative Destruction », *Research Policy*, (22)2, p. 3-22 or P. LeMasson, B. Weil, A. Hatchuel, *Strategic Management of Design and Innovation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance K. Bruland and D. Mowery, « Innovation through time », in J. Fagerberg, D. Mowery, R. Nelson (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Innovation*, Oxford, OUP, 2006, pp. 349-379, or M. Kipping, B. Usdiken, « History and Organization Studies : A Long Term View », in M. Bucheli and D. Wadhvani (eds.), *The Historical Turn in Organizational Studies*, Oxford, OUP, 2103. See also Christensen C. (1997), *The Innovator's dilemma*, Harvard Business School Press.

<sup>4</sup> P. Fridenson, « Quelques messages en retour des historiens aux gestionnaires », in L. Cailluet, Y. Lemarchand et M.-E. Chessel (dir.), *Histoire et Sciences de gestion*, Paris, Vuibert, 2013, p. 17-32.

<sup>5</sup> B. Cheffins and S. Banks, « Is Berle and Leans Really a Myth ? », *Business History Review*, Harvard Business School, vol. 83, Issue 3, autumn 2009, p. 443-474.

<sup>6</sup> R. Lauffer, « Proposition for a Comparative History of Education in Law and management : about the notion of jurisprudence », in S. Dameron and T. Durand (eds.), *Redesigning Management and Education Research. Challenging Proposals from European Scholars*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2011, p. 30-55.

Control as a case study<sup>7</sup>. Obviously other ways could be developed. This is one target of this new program.

## Conclusion

In the previous program, the deotirs underlined that “Having reached the end of this introduction, it is possible to argue that the PPF undoubtedly raised more questions that it has answered. However, the merging of texts from various disciplines and dealing with topics which are seemingly very distinct from one another has shown that real similarities exist over and above the specificities of place and context. In short, it is possible to conclude that the managerial way of thinking and practices constitute a noticeable and delineated field, even if the surface to assess seems vast. This research programme is a first step towards understanding how and at what pace the managerial way of thinking developed from concrete problems arising in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and to a greater extent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such a process cannot be disassociated from the present historical and political context, in this case, of France. This managerial thought bases itself on the emergence of small or large businesses. It depends on the expansiveness of their activities, on their number, their size and the problems that they need to address. The progressive appearance of professional managers and the development of training and advice systems increase the managerial practices and the knowledge that results from studying them. It is the main reason why a new step must be organized.

To conclude, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, managerial theory has gradually been established in order to solve practical problems<sup>15</sup>. The history of managerial ways of thinking can therefore also be defined as the history of theories that were created from managerial practices. We can therefore put forward the idea that management is characterised by a particular form of epistemological division between theory and practice. In this case, the production of the theories, that it to say the formulation of the general terms (which surpass a specific context) and the recurrent terms (valid at different moments in time) cannot be disassociated from the practices. It is therefore necessary to also study the stages and the content of this generalisation process even if some of its elements are already well known.

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<sup>7</sup> David, A. (2013), "Management Innovation, a Genealogical Perspective. The Case of Drucker's Management by Objectives and Self-Control", *Business History Conference*, Columbus, Ohio, march 21-23.

## Notes

- [1](#) Translation: Georgina Banfield Exeter University with the help of Muriel Le Roux.
- [2](#) de Gaulejac, *La société malade de la gestion. Idéologie gestionnaire, pouvoir managérial et harcèlement social*, Paris, Seuil, coll. « points », 2009.
- [3](#) McKenna, *The World's Newest Profession. Management Consulting in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge (Mass.), CUP, 2006; Kipping et Engwall, *Management Consulting. Emergence and Dynamics of a Knowledge Industry*, Oxford, OUP, 2005.
- [4](#) Dumont, *Essai sur l'individualisme. Une perspective anthropologique sur l'idéologie moderne*, Paris, Edition du Seuil, coll. « Points », réed. 1991.
- [5](#) Wren, *The Evolution of Management Thought*, New York, John Wiley, réed, 1994.
- [6](#) Le Goff, *Le Mythe de l'entreprise. Critique de l'idéologie managériale*, Paris, La Découverte, réed. 1995.
- [7](#) Braudel, *L'identité de la France*, Paris, Flammarion, coll. « Champs », t. II et t. III, Les hommes et les choses, réed. 1999.
- [8](#) Piaget, *Six études de psychologie*, Paris, Gallimard, Folio, 1987, p. 112.
- [9](#) *L'identité de la France*, 3 T., Paris, Flammarion, coll. « Champs », 1999.
- [10](#) Ory et Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France : de l'affaire Dreyfus à nos jours*, Paris, Perrin, 2004.
- [11](#) Grant, « Strategic Planning in a turbulent Environment : Evidence from the Oil Majors », *Strategic Management Journal*, vol. 24, n°6 (juin 2003), pp. 491-517.
- [12](#) Berry, *Une technologie invisible ? L'impact des instruments de gestion sur l'évolution des systèmes humains*, Paris, Publications CRG-École Polytechnique, 1983.
- [13](#) Cf. pionniers studies de Lemarchand, Nikitin, Colasse ou Zimnovitch.
- [14](#) Cochoy, *Une histoire du Marketing. Discipliner l'économie de marché*, Paris, La découverte, 1999.
- [15](#) Hatchuel : « Quel horizon pour les sciences de gestion ? vers une théorie de l'action collective », in David, Hatchuel, Laufer, *Les nouvelles fondations des sciences de gestion. Éléments d'épistémologie de la recherche en management*, Paris, Vuibert, 2002.
- [16](#) Godelier, *La culture d'entreprise*, Paris, La découverte, 2006.
- [17](#) Wren, *The Evolution of Management Thought*, New York, John Wiley, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 1994.
- [18](#) Garel, *Le management de projet*, Paris, La découverte 2003 ou Scranton, « Le management de projet : un nouvel objet de l'histoire d'entreprise », *Revue Française de Gestion*, n°192, mars 2009.
- [19](#) Bouillaud et Lécuyer, *L'invention de la gestion. Histoires et pratiques*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1994.

## CVs

**Muriel Le Roux** is a Senior Researcher at the CNRS. She is an historian specializing in Science and technological issues. She took her PhD at La Sorbonne-Paris IV on the history of Aluminium Pechiney Company's R&D. Her PhD thesis won her the Business and Industrial History Prize awarded by the French Ministry of Industry. Belonging to the Centre national de la recherche scientifique, after having been at the Maison française d'Oxford (UK) for four years, she works at the "Institut d'Histoire Moderne et contemporaine" (IHMC) and the École Normale supérieure (ENS) in Paris. She is working on the links between French public scientific and research centres, through a history of the CNRS, one of the most important public institutions for research and its links with industries such as Aventis-synthélabo, Laboratoires Pierre Fabre. She is also in charge of scientific research programmes of the Historical research committee for La Poste (French post office company).

**Eric Godelier** is professor at the École Polytechnique (a French university for science and engineering), in charge of developing and coordinating management and business history courses. He is also Chairman of the Humanities and Social Sciences department. He graduated from the École Normale Supérieure de Cachan, having specialized in economics and management studies. He obtained a Ph.D degree in History at EHESS, with a dissertation studying the French steel corporation *Usinor (1948-1986)*, and is a member of the editorial committee of *Entreprises et Histoire*. In the École Polytechnique's research center on management, CRG (Centre de Recherche en Gestion), he researches the conception and diffusion processes of management tools and models from an historical and anthropological perspective. In 2006 he published two books : *Usinor-Arcelor. Du local au Global*, the history of the largest French steel corporation from 1948 to 2004, and *La culture d'entreprise* (Corporate Culture). Since early 2006, he has been coordinating a four-year international program on French management tools and models (18th-20th centuries). In 2013, he published an article on « Corporate culture from an Historical Perspective » in a book on History and management sciences, Paris, Vuibert, edited by L. Cailluet, Y. Lemarchand and M.-E. Chessel.

**Gilles Garel** is full chair professor of innovation management at the Conservatoire national des arts et métiers (Cnam) in Paris, France. He is also a professor with teaching responsibilities at the Ecole polytechnique. Gilles conducts researches in the field of innovation and design management in collaboration with industry. He has been published in a range of learned journals and has contributed papers and presentations at numerous conferences and seminars.

**Albert David** is senior professor at Paris Dauphine University (France). He is the founder and director of M-Lab, a research team devoted to "R&D in management" and mainly working on management innovation within DRM, Dauphine's research center in Management. His publications are about organizational innovation and change processes, and the epistemology of management research. He is the editor in chief of FCS, an academic review devoted to Finance, Control and Strategy.