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# « Is a Shift Always a Drift? Governing Hybrid Organizations with Innovative Purpose »

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## ABSTRACT

Hybrid organizations are often confronted with the risk of mission drift, when the social purpose is somehow lost by the evolution of activities and the practices become decouple from the formal purpose. But if the purpose is innovative, tensions appear between the need to develop learning processes through innovations and the risks of losing the social purpose. The article aims at characterizing what are the potential shifts in an organization with an innovative purpose, and whether they constitute a mission drift or not. It is based on a longitudinal case study with a French hybrid organization with an innovative purpose in vocational training. Based on this empirical study, we first confirm that the innovative purpose leads to shifts in activities that are not necessarily mission drifts. We then show that the shifts can be classified in two main categories: those where learning creates a dissension on the interpretation of the organization's purpose, which we call "coverage shift", and those where exploration threatens the commonly accepted interpretation of a purpose, which we call "reinvention shift".

These two different situations create differentiated risks regarding mission drift, and therefore call for differentiated response at the governance level.

This study thus contributes to enriching the literature on the mission drift in hybrid organizations. It also suggests some avenues how to deviation control can be complemented by a capacity to assess the innovative shifts consistent with the purpose.

**Keywords:**

Mission drift; Hybrid organizations; Mission-driven companies; Innovative purpose

# **« Is a Shift Always a Drift? Governing Hybrid Organizations with Innovative Purpose »**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In response to contemporary challenges, many organizations are deploying an innovative model that combines the pursuit of social purpose along with a search for economic sustainability (Moss, Short, Payne, & Lumpkin, 2011). Research on these organizations gathered under the designation “mission-driven companies” or social enterprises has blossomed over the years. Social enterprises are innovative organizations, that seek to solve social or environmental problems in unprecedented ways, new products, services, process in order to meet unsolved persistent or poorly understood social issues (Chell, Nicolopoulou, & Karataş-Özkan, 2010).

They have been presented in previous studies as a form of hybrid organization (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014), hybrid in the sense that they rely on organizational arrangements resulting from the incorporation of plural and potentially competing institutional logics at the organizational level. Hybridity in social enterprises is then reflected in the fact that these new institutional arrangements generate paradoxical tensions (Ebrahim, Battilana, & Mair, 2014).

Indeed, these organizations have regularly been portrayed as being likely to experience significant tensions between the different logics they involve, generating situations where structures, practices, processes or organizational cultures coexist, causing competing or even contradictory commitments. In particular, most of the studied social enterprises instantiate a tension between two specific components: the normative objectives of responding to the social purpose and the more utilitarian economic ambitions, which aim to make the organization financially sustainable.

When confronted to these tensions, some social enterprises experience a progressive change in their organizational response to the stated mission, a phenomenon referred to in previous academic studies as “mission drifts”. These drifts have been mainly conceptualized as an inherently negative process. Defined as a lasting discontinuity between an organization’s purpose -why it *should* exist- and its actions, -how it *should* act- (Grimes, Williams, & Zhao, 2018), mission drift may lead to the partial abandonment of the mission, in favor of a commercial gain for instance (Cornforth, 2014) or an unconformity with the founder's last wishes (Jones, 2007). In a neo-institutional perspective, the drift is then seen as a too important compromise towards one or the other of the logics involved, a shift away that could threaten the hybridity of the organization.

To deal with this risk, management scholars stress the pivotal role of governance, and more specifically of control (Ebrahim et al. 2014). Hybrid organizations indeed need specific mechanisms to cope with the tension between competing demands of various kinds, including accountability mechanisms, for instance with impact assessment methods, or the involvement of stakeholders in governance committees.

A specific type of tension, however, relates to innovative organizations: learning tensions. As innovative organizations, social enterprises are confronted with learning situations that may lead them to choose between innovating or maintaining the *status quo* (Seelos & Mair, 2017). In some cases, knowledge gathered through exploration and innovation processes could therefore naturally lead to the evolution of the response to the social mission. These are all learnings that can lead to reinterpret their social mission, and the possible answers to the targeted social need (Seelos & Mair, 2017). Are these “shifts” necessarily mission “drifts”?

Integrating the issues raised by learning while seeking to preserve the model of mission they pursue can be potentially conflicting (Pache & Santos, 2010; Smith, Gonin, & Besharov, 2013). As the literature has grown, the tensions experienced by these learning situations are

becoming increasingly known. In particular, the tensions raised by episodes of mission evolution are commonly observed phenomena. However, in view of the variety of situations encountered (Grimes et al., 2018), it appears difficult to determine *a priori* whether or not changes in the activities undertaken under the mission are to be considered as drifts. We still lack a comprehensive understanding of the conditions under which a shift in organization's actions, especially those with innovative purposes, is to be considered as a drift, a form of divergence from the organization's identity (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Kraatz, Ventresca, & Deng, 2010).

Further research is therefore needed to understand the variety of situations to be monitored and the way in which changes are approached when they occur, in order to develop a better understanding of what constitutes mission drift and the multiple forms it could take in an innovative context. This leads to our research question: how to characterize the multiple forms of shifts in actions and their relation to potential mission drifts in organizations with an innovative purpose?

We explore this question in the context of a French hybrid organization where various shifts in the organization's response to its purpose were analyzed. This company, whose purpose is to provide professional education accessible to all, is known to be innovative in its sector, both by its learning models and its beneficiaries. On this case, we gathered archives data from 1999 to 2018, conducted interviews with leaders and used several impact social assessments conducted by one of their investors, a social impact fund. We used methodologies from design theories (Hatchuel & Weil, 2009) as tools for remodeling and categorizing those shifts. We highlighted the organization's changes as many possible mission drifts, identified the triggering factors as well as the conditions under which they occurred. We categorized them both according to the nature of the change and the importance of the learning produced. We as well drew these changes in relation with the deviation from the known mission.

Based on this empirical study, we first show that the dynamics of learning and exploration in an innovative organization naturally generates shifts in the interpretation of and response to the mission that could lead to potential mission drifts. Secondly, we show that these shifts can be classified in two main categories: those where learning creates a dissension on the interpretation of the organization's purpose, which we call "coverage shift", and those where exploration threatens the commonly accepted interpretation of a purpose, which we call "reinvention shift".

These two different situations create differentiated risks regarding mission drift, and therefore call for differentiated response at the governance level.

Based on this empirical study, the objective of this paper is threefold: This study contributes to enriching the literature on the mission drift in hybrid organizations. These results raise control issues and suggest new modes of governance, adapted to the control of the mission integrity, reconciling the two dynamics: control of deviation and support for innovation. Then, we showed that these shifts are as many answers to a renewed understanding of the mission, however, they generate debates on how these evolutions remain acceptable. How to ensure that changes do not divert from the formal purpose? And to what extent innovations are still consistent with the main purpose of the organization? Conversely, how can innovation be maintained when the organization seeks to avoid mission drift? We finally propose to refer to the concept of integrity. Integrity as a concept that encompasses these two dimensions: governance of mission drift and innovation.

In the following discussion, we will first present the literature on mission drift in social enterprises. In the second part, the case study is presented, together with the theoretical framework of design reasoning which will be used to analyze the empirical data. We will then introduce the method of data collection and analysis, as well as the empirical study of French Hybrid organization, where different organizational shifts have been studied. The insights

gained from the empirical case are then used to discuss and elaborate on the existing models of governing mission drifts. Finally, further research into how monitoring both mission deviation and mission expansion can provide managers with tools for balancing innovation and mission integrity is discussed.

## LITTERATURE REVIEW

### **Mission driven companies and multiple forms of mission-drifts**

The risk of mission drift, identified very early in the field of social enterprises, continues to fuel a significant amount of research today (Grimes et al., 2018). These risks have for instance notably been discussed in the microfinance industry (Mersland & Strøm, 2010) or in work-integration social enterprises (Battilana, Sengul, Pache, & Model, 2015). In micro-credit organizations, the diffusion of a commercial logic in the organizational practices, which leads them to refuse loans to certain previously eligible beneficiaries (Zhao & Grimes, 2016) can be associated with a mission drift.

These risks lead to considering social enterprises as fragile hybrid organizations that operate on a precarious balance (Ebrahim, Battilana, & Mair, 2014). Thus, most studies about mission-drift in social enterprises depict this delicate balance between maintaining a given situation to protect the mission and the changes generated overtime, for instance to face competition or to meet commercial objectives, in particular through innovation.

However, the variety of mission drifts cases and the conditions under which they occur still seem to be poorly controlled (Copestake, 2007; Grimes et al., 2018). Some authors, for instance, advocates for a conceptualization of mission drift that not exclusively rely on the economic and social duality of the mission-driven organization. Jones (2007) depicted the case of the Hersey school, a social institution which aimed at *“preparing students to lead productive and fulfilling lives by providing a cost-free, private, coeducational home and school for*



*children from families of low income.*” The project of its founder Milton Hersey, as specified in his last wishes, was thus to fight exclusion of certain segments of the population often far from the possibility of having a decent level of education. In this study, Jones discusses the relevance, of a project to create a research and teaching institute on children's cognitive development, proposed by the school's management.

The Alumni association of this school clearly sees this as a drift. They considered that the acceptable expansion strategy was to pursue the original will of its founder, which was to welcome more and more students. In this perspective, mission drift is understood as the more or less assumed deterioration of the original mission. Either in favor of a commercial logic (Thompson & Williams, 2014), or for others reasons.

On the other hand, from a social innovation perspective, Mair et al. (2017) have shown many cases of social enterprises where the social purposes carry a part of unknown. That is to say, where the problems and solutions are not fully understood or where the impact potential of ideas and alternative is uncertain. These social purpose entails an exploratory dimension which leads to regular learnings. Learnings generate renewed understanding of the purpose and opportunities for change in the way the purpose is addressed, either in terms of strategy, resources and capabilities, or in terms of products and services delivered. But all those changes are also as many potential conflicts and risks of mission drifts, in the sense that they could contravene to the hybrid nature of the organization. Social enterprises might experience a struggle regarding these learning have to be considered and the way these changes must be considered.

Anyway, the risks of occurrence of possible mission drift as described in the literature testify to the lability the social enterprises towards its social purpose, especially with hybrid organizations where innovation is an ongoing concern. This situation advocates for further research on how to prevent mission-drift from occurring.

## **Governing mission drift in Mission driven companies**

Mission drift raises the issue of governance, and more specifically of control (Ebrahim et al. 2014). Hybrid organizations need to pay attention to the governance of the tension between competing demands of various kinds. Previous researches advocate for defining a governance that could able to fit with the singularities of the social enterprise (Bruneel, Moray, Stevens, & Fassin, 2016). Both the variety of situations to be monitored and the way in which changes are approached when they occur, remain poorly understood. As a result, literature on mission drift has almost systematically depicts social and economic missions as two antagonisms. This has led to talk about any evolution regarding mission fulfillment as a threat, and for which a particular monitoring logic is being established, which consists in characterizing a possible deviation from a stabilized representation of the mission.

A growing stream of research examines the conditions under which social enterprises can sustain their hybrid nature over time (e.g Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2013). And one of the emerging themes in this domain thus concerns the ability of such organizations to balance overtime their social and economic objectives through these organizational changes. The response to these challenges through appropriate governance mechanisms has appeared to be a promising approach for academics (Battilana, Besharov, & Mitzinneck, 2017; Ebrahim et al., 2014). For instance stakeholders engagement (Ramus & Vaccaro, 2017), workforce socialization (Battilana & Dorado, 2010), or social accounting (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2010; Nicholls, 2009) could aims at helping social enterprises to stick to their original mission despite increased competition and diverging commercial pressures. (Tracey & Phillips, 2007; Zhao & Grimes, 2016)

In this regard, the question of monitoring social performance is receiving a renewed attention. Inheriting a dual academic tradition: philanthropy on the one hand with the question of impact assessments (e.g Grieco, Michelini, & Iasevoli, 2015), and corporate social responsibility on

the other , the question of social accounting is based on the premise that social performance must be measured on the same level as financial performance, in order to be able to justify and monitor the action taken.

The control of this social dimension seems to be based on more delicate foundations than its financial counterpart – as it is sometimes difficult to specify causal links between activities and outcomes, particularly when these outcomes occur outside organizational boundaries or are affected by multiple actors and environmental factors (Ebrahim et al. 2014). This emphasis on monitoring by the setting of appropriate outputs or outcomes indicators is based on the assumption that accurate monitoring of the social dimensions could help to signal social changes, and so might help to prevent drifts, be it through the explanation of the associated theory of change (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2014) or through management’s tool such as scorecard (Robert, Davenport, Kaplan, & Norton, 2001).

However, if control seems essential in situations of precarious balance between the different logics that constitute the hybridity of the organization, and in which any change is assimilated to a threat to one or the other of the logics, in the case of innovative purposes, as described by Mair et al. (2017), the question of the drift seems quite different. It is not so much based on a problem of monitoring social performance through indicators on the known dimensions of the mission. The challenge here consists in knowing how to support the transformations of the organization, linked to the successive reinterpretations of the latter. That leads to our research question: how to characterize the multiple forms of shifts in actions and their relation to potential mission drifts in organizations with an innovative purpose?

## **METHOD**

### **Research methodology**

To address the research question, a qualitative, retrospective in-depth case study was conducted of a French hybrid organization, subsequently called OpenClassrooms. The research study was designed as a case study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Pettigrew, 1990; Yin, 2013) as it was of an exploratory nature and aimed at formulating new hypothesis rather than testing the existing ones. This paper is built on a single case study, and does not aim at providing a general empirical validation. However, one single case can illustrate interesting phenomena and provide important learnings (Siggelkow, 2007). Eisenhardt suggests that several different methods can be used to ‘triangulate’ the results. This company was selected for this study because we had access to a wide range of data regarding the process of changes undertaken and how it intertwines with the social mandate. The case studied mainly relied on internal and external archives data from 1999 to 2018, which consists in forum discussion, successive versions of the platform and its training offer, press releases and press articles. We also conducted interviews with the founders and one of their board members. We finally used several impact social assessments conducted by one of their investors, a social impact fund. Also, the aim of the research project was not only to describe empirical practices in use (Argyris & Schon, 1996) but also to carry out a revision of the existing theoretical management models.

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### **OpenClassrooms case background**

To better understand the phenomenon of mission drift in a mission-driven company an exploratory study was initiated at a French Hybrid Organization (OpenClassrooms) whose purpose is to “make education accessible”. The context of Open Classroom was considered representative of the challenges that hybrid organization with innovative purpose are facing for the following reasons.

- First, the company started as a non-profit and now engages into a for-profit legal form. OpenClassrooms, formerly known as the free online learning platform “*le site du Zero*” and has finally become as a for-profit company in 2007, after the founders graduated.
- Then, this company is known to be innovative in its sector, both with revisiting models of education and by the characteristics of the people it trains. The mission is said to be innovative because it has led to multiple expansions. During this 18-year period of existence, OpenClassrooms has known a lot of evolutions, regarding its business models, the services it provided and the beneficiaries it looked to reach.

The company as we know it today was originally created as a website in 1999, and aimed at addressing two main frustrations. The first one was the exclusion of certain populations groups from learning: the beginners. In fact, the founders' premise was that these "beginner" individuals are being constrained in their access to knowledge, given the nature of the educational resources available. In this very specific case, the training manuals as they existed at that time in computer science did not allow a beginner, i.e. without any prerequisites in the field, to start learning on his or her own side.

The second frustration that led to the creation of the site was related to the way in which this knowledge was taught, the pedagogical premises. Books on computer science were perceived as particularly complex and with few practical dimensions. The founders thus argue that they had the project to create tutorials, which would be "as they would have like to learned it" if it had existed. Thus, it is therefore considered that beyond the formal statement “Making education accessible” for Open classrooms encompasses two attributes. The first one is related to a model of accessibility, a wish to address exclusion issues from education. The second one is linked to the pedagogical framework. Ie. Once, these two elements having been highlighted, it is possible to trace their evolutions, especially to their associated knowledge over time.

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Insert Figure 1 about here  
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From this initial situation (Figure 1), this company has displayed a rich history of evolutions, be it with the activities undertaken for the social purpose or towards the interpretation of it. These changes was sometimes turbulent, sometimes more peaceful, but generated control issues, debates on how they compliant with the purpose. If interpreted under the control logic described in the literature review, all these episodes would have be considered as potential mission drifts, since they would not have met the accessibility objectives set in advance.

We thus highlighted more precisely some of these episodes which managed the competing institutional logics typical of hybrid organizations. 11 notables episodes of changes, which eventually result in visible misfit between the organization's actions and the organization's purpose, have been selected (See Table 2).

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### **Theoretical Framework – C-K theory**

The choice of method was motivated by the desire to be able to qualify the mission in a sufficiently specific way to be able to detect changes likely to lead to drifts. We thus borrowed methodologies from design theories (Hatchuel & Weil, 2009) as tools for remodeling and categorizing the dynamics of changes. Design theory has attempted to develop models of designers' reasoning, modelling the interaction between knowledge and innovation. In particular, We used the C-K theory reasoning framework. C-K Design theory, has already been successfully used in the study of innovation processes; therefore, it has proven its efficiency as

an analytical tool for highlighting the design process (see e.g Elmquist & Le Masson, 2009; Elmquist & Segrestin, 2007; Gillier, Piat, Roussel, & Truchot, 2010; Lenfle, 2012).

In this present case, a modeling through the analytical framework of the C-K theory allows us to explain and model the genealogy of the mission, by articulating the organization's actions taken over time ("how it *should* act"), and the knowledge associated to the purpose ("why it *should* exist" –Grimes et al., 2018). That qualifies the social mandates, beyond its formal statement.

C-K Design theory also allows the fact to consider the mission as an innovative object, in a sense that it carries both a part of desirability and unknown. The desirability relies on the fact that the mission addresses a unsolved social needs that have value for society. The unknown means for the fact that, even if we know a certain number of things about these phenomena, we do not yet have an absolute way to solve them.

Using this framework, the organization's shifts depicted above (figure 2) were categorized both according to the nature of the change in terms of actions and of learning produced. We as well drew theses changes in relation with the deviation from the known mission. In the following section the main findings will be presented and the model exposed.

## **CASE STUDY**

### **Covering broader meaning of exclusion**

In its not-profit phase, the online-platform was successful and felt as ever-growing: the founder successfully gathered a large community of learners, and quickly developed a solid customer base. Soon, this educational online platform needed to find way to support the growing management costs, including server hosting and maintenance costs.

To avoid having to rely solely on erratic donations from certain users, the founders tried to design sustainable ways to meet their growing financial needs. The founders' answer to that matter was to deal with advertising agencies and incorporate advertising banners, whose remuneration depends on the number of visitors, in targeted part of the site.

As soon as the question of the financial sustainability of the platform arose, the fact that the learning content was free or not began to generate debates among the user community. A striking fact is that even though this question of gratuity did not constitute a explicit commitment to the purpose at this time, it appeared as a fundamental and cleavage element from the moment it appeared. From that moment, OpenClassrooms had to deal with this financial dimension even though the mission did not formally include this dimension a priori. Therefore, it's possible monitoring by indicators would be unlikely to control a possible drift on that perspective. According to the data we gathered, it would presumably be based on the expertise level of the learners and not on their financial means.

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Insert Figure 2 about here  
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Ultimately, OpenClassrooms enriched its understanding of what could lead to educational blockages. Whereas until then "for all" was understood as "even for beginners", here a new form of exclusion had been revealed: the financial exclusion. The issue of gratuitousness of the education has from this moment been integrated as a crucial element of discussion (see figure 2). And as a matter of fact, later in their history, every time this financial dimension arose, has been addressed as follows: the knowledge content will remain freely available, although other additional services of offers may be charged for. New products or services that could potentially be profitable have been justified by this rationale. For instance,



the creation of a series of paper and digital books on the most famous courses on the website (See table 2, case C), or the creation of premium certification offers (see table 2, case G).

The issue of financial exclusion was not the only one that led OpenClassrooms. to re-interrogate the scope and content of its mission. This type of re-qualification episode of one of the properties associated with the mission is not isolated and the company has experienced similar episodes at other times in its history. For instance, in 2015, a partnership with the French governmental agency dedicated to management of unemployed people was launched. This partnership focused on the professional retraining of unemployed people for jobs in high demand in the IT sector. This program subsequently called “*a guaranteed job*”, made the promise of a return to work within six months after the completion of the training. Otherwise, the training was fully repaid. Once again, the question of "for all" has been more widely covered. The fact of integrating professional retraining alongside beginners into the "for all" has generated significant efforts to be able to understand what employability means. The fact to include the issue of unemployment was not self-evident, and was generated by a series of learning. In fact, the company discovered that many of its users used the skills learned on the platform as much as they used them as a promotional object during a job interview or as a trigger for a career change. At the same time, statistical studies carried out by a government agency have shown the inadequacy between the training of some unemployed people and unfilled job offers, particularly in the field of IT. From a design reasoning perspective: this shows the co-expansion of knowledge associated to the mission, and mechanisms of actions.

### **Reinventing the MOOCs to overcome conflict.**

As shown in previous studies (see Smith et al. 2013 for a review or Mair et al. 2017 for case studies), learning can be a source of conflict for mission-driven companies as it can

potentially lead to contradictory recommendation on how to deal with it. OpenClassrooms, too, has shown various demonstrations of this phenomenon in its history.

The beginning of the 2010s saw the emergence of a new popular form of online course, called massive open online course (MOOC). In its original sense, a massive open online course is an online course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web. In addition to traditional course materials such as filmed lectures, readings, and problem sets, many MOOCs provide interactive courses with user forums to support community interactions among students and teachers as well as immediate feedback to quick quizzes and assignments.

The development of MOOCs has led OpenClassrooms to develop a new positioning with regards to this movement. Therefore, as from 2011, the question of developing partnerships with universities to create new content is raised. In 2013, a portion of the platform's courses, previously labelled as tutorials, have officially become MOOCs. From the user community perspective, these changes have been widely discussed for two reasons. The first one, is because that re-discussed the fact that the more active users could take part in the production of the learning content as it was historically the case. The second one was more unexpected. A significant part of the debate concerned the value that users placed on certain properties of the "tutorial" model compared to the "MOOC" model. In fact, it turned out that a portion of the users were very attached to the fact that the courses could be taken at any pace, at any time of the year, which was no longer possible with MOOCs.

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Insert Figure 3 about here  
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In short, these learnings largely re-discussed this part of the mission which is the "as I would have liked to learn" (Figure 3). To overcome conflict, OpenClassrooms had to try to create a form of MOOC compliant with these prerequisites, the so to speak "MOOC as one

would have to learn it". As a result, they have had to rework both the interaction and pedagogy models to be able to propose MOOCs that comply with this requirement.

These type of episodes of “reinvention” to overcome conflict, has been experienced of at other times in the history of OpenClassrooms. In reference to the Table 2, high level courses, such as Data science (case I) and B2B offer (case E), can be mentioned.

### *A model of mission shifts*

Our results highlight that over time, various episodes profoundly questioned the way in which the company fulfills its mission. We found that these events cannot immediately be qualified as mission drift a priori but that they are part of a process that is aimed at finding responses to prevailing knowledge associated with the mission. From that in-depth longitudinal enquiry conducted in a French Hybrid organization therefore, a mission shift model is proposed. We distinguish mission drift as usually conceptualize in the social enterprise literature from two others types of shifts: coverage shift and reinvention shift. The shifts where learning creates a dissension on the interpretation of the organization’s purpose, which we call “coverage shift”, and those where exploration threatens the commonly accepted interpretation of a purpose, which we call “reinvention shift”.

We highlighted a kind of prevailing knowledge, which largely determine the acceptability of the changes encountered. We proposed to use the concept of mission integrity (Carvajal Pérez, Araud, Chaperon, Le Masson, & Weil, 2018) to qualify this phenomenon. The mission integrity is thus composed both by the properties associated with the mission and their commonly accepted understanding at a given time. Every encountered change has explicitly or not been confronted the mission integrity and thus raise governance issue related to this integrity.

This concept of integrity yet entails a dynamic perspective. Learnings associated with new knowledge aim at redefining the frame of this integrity and at reshaping the social mission (cf Table 3).

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Insert Table 3 about here  
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## **DISCUSSION**

This research proposed a model of mission shifts that not only relies on the formal mission statement of the social enterprise but that aims at disclosing its understanding using design theories as a model for reasoning. It attempts to reveal the interpretation that is made of it at a given moment through its associated knowledge. We showed that these shifts are as many answers to a renewed understanding of the mission. However, in many of the shift's situations depicted on the case, we showed that they generate debates on how these evolutions remain acceptable. These raises questions regarding on the way to drive these evolutions. For instance, how to ensure that changes do not divert from the formal purpose? And to what extent innovations are still consistent with the main purpose of the organization? Conversely, how can innovation be maintained when the organization seeks to avoid mission drift? These results raise control issues and suggest new modes of governance, adapted to the control of the mission integrity.

The question of the control of the social mission is presented here from a new perspective. Alongside with a classical social performance accounting, which instanciate a deviation control, these results tend to show the need for a different form of monitoring in the case of an innovative mission. Indeed, we show the need to design an additional form of control that could be able to monitor the expansion of the mission.

These results thus suggest new modes of governance, adapted to the control of the mission integrity, drawing on previous studies on innovative hybrid organization that aims at understanding their condition of sustainability (Mair et al. 2017). In the discussion that organizes the debate around scale versus innovate, we thus propose to reconcile the two dynamics: control of deviation while scaling and support for innovation while innovating.

This study contributes to enriching the literature on mission drift and to showing non-exclusively negative aspects of it (Tremblay-Boire, 2011). It advocates for a need of control mechanisms that can could be legitimate to debate o the new knowledge gathered through expansion. A shift in the mission involves at least two steps: adjudicating the acceptability of this knowledge in relation to the mission and then being able to reframe a space of cohesion, when shift has occurred. On this matter, it draws on past studies that show the needs for meetings arenas or herding spaces dedicated to debates or socialization around the mission (Ometto, Gegenhuber, Winter, & Greenwood, 2018).

Previous research has emphasized on how social enterprises that have diverged from their original mission can re-find the expected equilibrium between financial and social performance (Battilana and Lee 2014), through stakeholder engagement for instance or through socialization spaces centered around the mission (Jay, 2013). This study contributes to building up a governance adapted to the hybrid model, by providing social entrepreneurs with new perspectives on the mechanisms that trigger a possible mission drift. Former studies have called for a better understanding of the conditions for governance adapted to the singularity of social enterprises, of their risks of drift and accountability challenges (Ebrahim et al. 2014). This could help to show how to anticipate and categorize changes before they generate the crisis situations depicted on previous literature (see Bruneel et al. 2016)

If many previous governance research on mission drifts had focus on the sometimes conflicting interrelationships between social mandate and commercial pressure (Mason &

Doherty, 2016; Muñoz & Kimmitt, 2018; Staessens, Kerstens, Bruneel, & Cherchye, 2018), by drawing new perspectives on mission changes, this research participate in shedding new control perspective, introducing innovation expansion as a potential trigger for mission drifts. It sheds the light on a new dimension of and further research could the acceptable balance between social and economic orientations in social enterprises.

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**TABLE 1\***  
**Submission Data from 2004 and 2005**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Type of data</b>	<b>Date</b>
Archives	Social impact assessment	2017, 2018
	Due diligence	2016
Interviews	CoFounders	2018
	Board Members	2019
	Impact investors	2018
Public data	Internal forum discussions	1999 – 2018
	archived versions of the website	1999 – 2018
	Open Mooc “How do we work at OpenClassrooms ?”	2017
	National press releases	2007 - 2018
	Specialized IT sites	2007 - 2018

<b>Date</b>	<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Changes – Organization’s actions</b>	<b>New knowledge</b>	<b>Type of change</b>
<b>2005</b>	A	V2 - Content editing : Development of tools for creating educational content, made available to all, to help the site develop in crowdsourcing. Previously, community only active on the forum, now becomes a site designer	Learning model : Wiki-style	Product, service
<b>2007</b>	B	Incorporation into a for profit form. Provide more courses, to a wider audience. Financing by advertising banner. Free access to tutorials	Financial exclusion	Governance
<b>2009</b>	C	Publication of paper and digital books : Publication of flagship courses in the “Livre du Zéro” collection.		Product, service
<b>2011 - 2013</b>	D	Tutorials have become courses then MOOC. The courses become scheduled and monitored by validation exams.	MOOC Movement	Product, service
<b>2012- 2014</b>	E	Expansion of the offer - B2B	Professional training	Product, service
<b>2014</b>	F	Capital raise . Finance the development of courses and the diversification of content on other themes		Governance
<b>2013</b>	G	Success certificates/ Freemium offers		Product, service
<b>2015</b>	H	“Pôle employ” partnership - Training of the unemployed : Creation of the Program: “guaranteed employment”	New form of exclusion - Unemployment	Product, service
<b>2017</b>	I	Partnership with prestigious institution - High level courses : eg. data science	New form of exclusion	Product, service
<b>2018</b>	J	Veiled student	New form of exclusion	Product, service
<b>2018</b>	K	Capital raise - internationalization		Governance

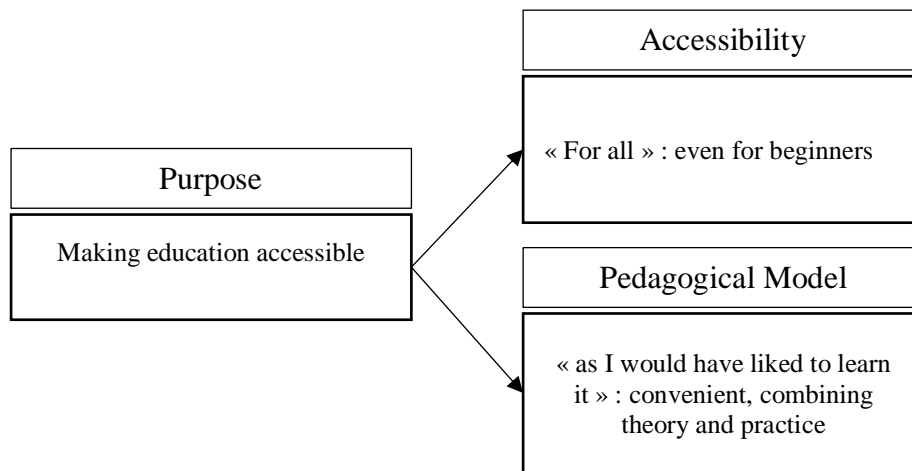
**TABLE 2\***  
**History of notable events**

**TABLE 3\***  
**A typology of mission shifts**

	<b>Regressing (drift)</b>	<b>Coverage</b>	<b>Reinvention</b>
<i>Impact on Mission Integrity</i>	Full or partial abandonment of one of the attribute of the purpose.	Learning through the acquisition of new knowledge creates a dissension on the former interpretation of the organization's purpose	Exploration threatens the commonly accepted interpretation of a purpose.
<i>Governance issue</i>	Maintaining the balance overtime	Integrating these enriched interpretations of mission into the discussion. Either accept it or not.	Overcome the conflicts either by abandoning the exploration or by designing it in a way that is acceptable to the mission integrity.
<i>Control issue</i>	Outcomes indicators ensure that the mission is fulfilled on pre-determined dimensions.	Outcomes indicators do not address the new dimensions generated by learning. Therefore, do not capture potential drifts	Outcomes indicators do not see the redesign effort to overcome the conflict. They may detect non-existent drift.
<i>Examples encountered in the cas</i>	if OpenClassron had abandoned the "beginners" in favour of more profitable users.	Advertising banners (B) Paper Book (C) Offer expansion (F) Freemium courses (G) Program for unemployed (H) Veiled student (J),	MOOC (D) B2B (E) Data science course (I)

**FIGURE 1\***

**Initial representation of the social purpose**



**FIGURE 2\***

**Covering broader forms of educational exclusion**

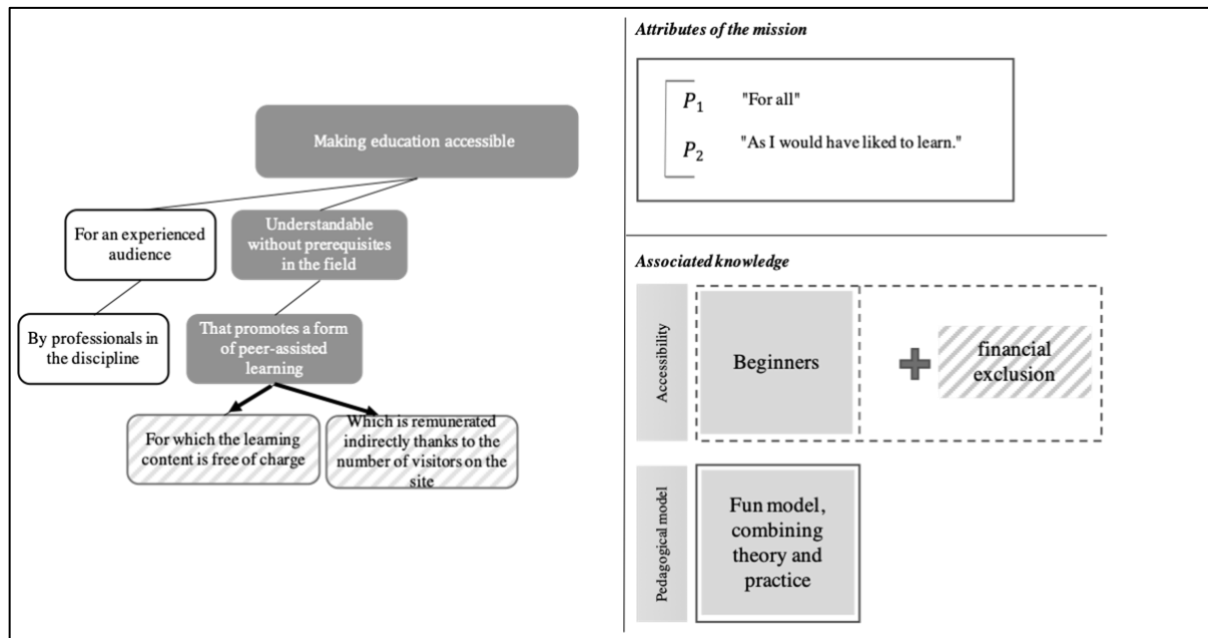


FIGURE 3\*

Reinventing the MOOC

