Implementation of management innovation in nonprofit organizations: What obstacles?

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Résumé :

The emerging literature on management innovation has principally focused on firms, thereby neglecting nonprofit organizations (NPOs). Yet, NPOs have also adopted management innovations to support the strong growth and professionalization of the nonprofit sector. Arguing that NPOs represent theoretically a specific management framework, this study aims at identifying the specific obstacles faced by NPOs when they implement a management innovation. Hence, we have conducted an in-depth case study in an international nongovernmental organization. Our results show that the specific internal obstacles in NPOs are their complex human resource management and their lack of financial resources. Moreover, a negative internal perception of the management innovation due to a lack of clarity, accuracy and a real systemic scope could be source of problems. Externally, the high accountability toward stakeholders could slow down the implementation of management innovation. These results contribute to the literature on both management innovation and nonprofit management.

Mots-clés : management innovation; nonprofit organizations; case study; international nongovernmental organizations

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1. INTRODUCTION

What is the common point between the multidivisional-form company, the total quality management or more recently the freedom-form company? They are major management innovations that have given a sustainable competitive advantage to the firms which have invented and implemented them. Indeed, management innovation is the type of innovation giving the most sustainable competitive advantage, especially when the innovation is radical (Birkinshaw et al., 2008). Management innovations are defined as new management practices, processes or structures that change significantly the way of managerial work is performed in order to reach organizational goals (Volberda el al., 2014). Yet, management innovation is much less studied than technological innovation (Crossan and Apaydin, 2010; Keupp et al. 2012). Moreover, the research on management innovation focused principally on firms or on public organizations such as Damanpour et al. (1989) and more recently Damanpour and Schneider (2009).

Surprisingly, the nonprofit sector has been neglected whereas the Third Sector plays increasingly a major economic role (Anheier, 2014; Salamon, 2012). The growth of this sector has led to major managerial changes such as the professionalization of the organizations (Hwang and Powell, 2009). Innovation is now considered in the nonprofit sector to be as important as in the for-profit sector. Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) have addressed the necessity to raise their effectiveness and efficiency by adopting better managerial practices (Anheier, 2014, Hwang and Powell, 2009). Indeed, the production processes in NPOs are highly based on human inputs and intangible factors (Akingbola, 2013), similar to the process of management innovation (Volberda et al., 2014). Thus, NPOs seem to be a fruitful and specific field of research on management innovation.

Yet, studies on management innovation in NPOs are very scarce although NPOs represent a specific unit of analysis. NPOs are theoretically different through three main distinctive features: a focus on a social mission rather than on profit goals; the inclusion of any type of shareholder but a complex multiplicity and diversity of stakeholders; and extreme external resource dependence on funders whose expectations are different from investors in the for-profit sector. Thus, these features imply specific management issues for NPOs managers that could impact the implementation of management innovation.

Recently in the emerging literature on management innovation, a few studies have begun to address precisely the research issue about the obstacles of management innovation implementation (Ansari et al., 2014; Dubouloz, 2013; Giuliani and Robert, 2016, Giuliani et al., 2017, Madrid-Guijaro et al. , 2009, Wagner et al., 2011). Following on this research issue but arguing that these few studies focused only on firms while NPOs represent a specific management framework, the aim of this article is to explore:

What are the specific obstacles faced by NPOs during the implementation of a management innovation?

An in-depth case study within an international nongovernmental organization has been performed to answer this research question. After a literature review to define management innovation and the specific management framework of NPOs, the case study is detailed. The results revealed that the specific internal obstacles in NPOs are their complex human resource management and their lack of financial resources. Moreover, a negative internal perception of the management innovation due to a lack of clarity, accuracy and a real systemic scope could also cause some problems. Externally, the high accountability toward stakeholders could slow down the implementation of management innovation in NPOs. Finally, NPOs with an international dimension have also to address the major issue of disparities about educational level, cultural practices and security risks. These obstacles are then theoretically discussed in line with the NPOs' specificities but also in a perspective of potential cultural misfits and gaps between rhetoric and reality. The article ends with some managerial implications and concluding remarks which suggest some future research avenues.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this part, we explain firstly the under-representation of management innovation in the innovation literature. We define also management innovation and detail the different types of management innovation. Then, the first results of the emerging studies on the obstacles of the management innovation implementation are also presented. Finally, we outline the specific management framework of NPOs and justify our research question.

2.1. WHAT IS MANAGEMENT INNOVATION?

Several systematic reviews of the innovation literature reported that management innovation has been much less studied than technological innovation (Crossan and Apaydin, 2010; Keupp et al. 2012). Volberda et al. (2014) suggest that the under-representation of the management innovation in the innovation literature could be explained by its complex nature. As management innovation is tacit and less observable (Birkinshaw et al. 2008; Damanpour, 2014) it is harder to clearly define the boundaries of this concept. Nevertheless, Volberda et al. (2014) try to define management innovation as new management practices, processes or structures that change significantly the way of managerial work is performed in order to reach organizational goals. According to Damanpour (2014), the development of the research on management innovation has been slowed down because of a multiple conceptualization through various terms: administrative, organizational, managerial and finally management innovation. Considering that these different conceptualizations overlap in the same field, he proposes a consensual definition of management innovation by selecting the key components of each conceptualization. Thus, he defines management innovations as "nontechnological innovations that have been conceptualized in contrast to technology-based product and process innovations and pertain to new organizational structures, administrative systems, and management practices." (Damanpour, 2014, p. 1265). He selects the term management innovation because it is the most frequent term used in recent publications.

Furthermore, Mol and Birkinshaw (2014) highlight the necessity to distinguish between incremental and radical management innovations. Incremental management innovations refer to improvements of existing practices while radical management innovations constitute a significant departure from existing practice. Mol and Birkinshaw (2014) add also a distinction on the breadth of the innovation's impact on the organization. On the one hand, management innovation could concern only one discrete function of the organization. On the other hand, management innovation could be systemic by impacting several or all the functions of the organization.

The introduction of management innovation is often considered as a process including different steps. In the article of Birkinshaw et al., (2008) which is at the core of the renewal of academic interest on management innovation according to Volberda et al. (2014), the authors present four different steps: motivation (recognition of the problem), invention, implementation, routinization. This model refers to the generation and implementation of a radical management innovation which is new to the state of art. However, an organization could adopt a management innovation without necessarily generated it first (Damanpour, 2014). The "newness" could be only at the organizational level when an organization adopt an existing practice. Thus, the "invention" phase could be replaced by the phase of a "selection" of a practice available in the market to adopt it with adaptation or not (Volberda et al., 2014). For this type of incremental management innovation, the model of Damanpour and Schneider (2006) appears more relevant. This model of innovation adoption is composed of three phases: initiation (recognition of a need and identification of potential suitable innovations); adoption decision (selection of an innovation); and implementation. In this case implementation could be defined as follows "The process by which an adopter strives to create a better fit between an external practice and the adopter's particular needs to increase its zone of acceptance during implementation" (Ansari et al., 2010, p. 71)

In the following part, we will focus on the obstacles during the implementation phase when the introduction of the management innovation has officially been decided (either after the generation of the innovation within the organization or the selection of an existing practice from outside).

2.2. Obstacles to the implementation of management innovation

In the emerging literature on management innovation, few studies have focused specifically on the obstacles during the implementation phase. Dubouloz (2013) argues that in the innovation literature most of researches on the obstacles to the implementation of innovation deal with technological innovations. The author adds also that the emerging literature on management innovation focuses on the antecedents of the decision to adopt management innovation rather than the obstacles during the implementation phase after the adoption decision.

The obstacles could be understood to be problems that prevent innovation or hinder innovation process (Tourigny & Le, 2004). In our article, the obstacles studied are problems which hinder innovation process because the management innovation is still adopted in the end. Dubouloz (2013) distinguishes three categories of obstacles in which subcategories are integrated

- Internal obstacles related to : human resources, financial resources and organizational structure

- External obstacles related to: the supply (for instance, difficulties to find financial, human resources, training sessions…), the demand (needs of the consumer, limits of the market) and environment (local and national politics)

- Obstacles related to the attributes of the innovation: relative disadvantages, incompatibility, complexity, difficulty to test it, weak observability, high cost

To classify the results of our literature review on the obstacles of management innovation implementation, we built on this Dubouloz's typology (2013) while we provide some adjustments. First, we noticed that the obstacles related to the attributes of management innovation represent in fact internal obstacles. Either these obstacles refer to an incompatibility between the management innovation's principles with core elements of the organizational structure, or they represent a negative internal perception of the management innovation. Second, we have added the international dimension to the "environment" subcategory in the external obstacles, following on Volberda et al. (2014) who shed the light on the importance of the international perspective in the research of management innovation.

Thus, the results of our literature review on the obstacles during the implementation of management innovation are presented in the following table (Table 1)

Table 1 - Summary of the obstacles during the implementation of management innovation within firms

INTERNAL OBSTACLES		AUTHORS
Human resources	- Lack of competences - Lack of commitment - Lack of time - Lack of internal communication	(Ansari *et al.*, 2010, 2014; Birkinshaw *et al.*, 2008; Dubouloz, 2013, Giuliani *et al.*, 2017; Madrid-Guijaro *et al.* , 2009, Wagner *et al.*, 2011)
Financial resources	- *no significant results*	(Dubouloz, 2013)
Incompatibility of the management innovation principles with the organizational structure	- Cultural misfits of the management innovation principles with the established and historical organizational culture	(Ansari *et al.*, 2010, 2014)
A negative internal perception of the management innovation	- Lack of clarity - High cost of the implementation - Risks of the degradation of the working conditions. - Gap between rhetoric and reality	(Duboulouz, 2013; Canet, 2012; Giuliani and Robert, 2016, Giuliani *et al.*, 2017; Madrid-Guijaro *et al.* , 2009, Wagner *et al.*, 2011, Zbaracki, 1998)
EXTERNAL OBSTACLES		**AUTHORS**
Supply	- Difficulty to raise funds - Difficulty to find partners	(Duboulouz, 2013; Madrid-Guijaro *et al.* , 2009)
Demand	- *no results*	
Environment	- International dimension : Cultural and institutional distance between subsidiaries	(Ansari *et al.*, 2010, 2014; Giuliani and Robert., 2016; Giuliani *et al.*, 2017; Volberda *et al.*, 2014)

2.3. NPOS: A SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

2.3.1. A focus on the fulfillment of a social mission in harmony with the core organizational values

NPOs are founded by groups of people who decide to gather around shared values. They are structured around a social mission such as financing, promoting or realizing programs with positive social impact (Anheier, 2014). The activities of NPOs must stay fundamentally congruent with their social mission and organizational values so that it impacts the work of the managers (Kaine and Green, 2013). The main mission of nonprofit managers is above all to guarantee the focus on the fulfillment of the social mission in harmony with the core organizational values shared by the stakeholders. Moreover, the importance of the organizational values could easily lead to the necessity of a value-driven management. (Akingbola, 2013; Ridder and McCandless, 2010).

Another specific management challenge related to this focus on a social mission is the performance measurement. In spite of some recent improvements such as the use of adapted financial ratios or adapted balance scorecards (Anheier, 2014; Kaplan, 2001), nonprofit managers still must address the co-existence of multiple bottom lines like the duality between financial results and social impact (Akingbola, 2013; Anheier, 2014).

2.3.2. A complex multiplicity and diversity of stakeholders

NPOs have no shareholders and are organized holistically, with numerous stakeholders. Accountability to a multiplicity of stakeholders (e.g., volunteers, paid employees, governing boards, private donors, institutional funders, other NPOs, local authorities, beneficiaries, and suppliers) directly affects the work of NPOs. Therefore, nonprofit managers must address the major issue of satisfying the divergent and conflicting interests among their stakeholders (Akingbola, 2013; Ridder and McCandless, 2010; Stone *et al.*, 1999).

Internally, NPOs have the specific and complex human resource management task of recruiting and managing a mixed staff (e.g., historical members, short-term volunteers, paid and professional employees, newcomers from the for-profit sector …). This diversity of internal stakeholders lead to divergent interests and motivations among them which could complicate their cohabitation (Akingbola, 2013; Anheier, 2014; Kreutzer and Jäger, 2011; Ridder and McCandless 2010). NPOs have increasingly engaged in business-like practices such as managerialism and rationalization, but they must achieve a social mission as their priority. In line with this trend, the combination of different internal stakeholders between the paid and professional staff, the volunteers and the historical members could be a source of management tension (Hwang and Powell, 2009; Kreutzer and Jäger, 2011; Sanders and Mcclellan, 2014).

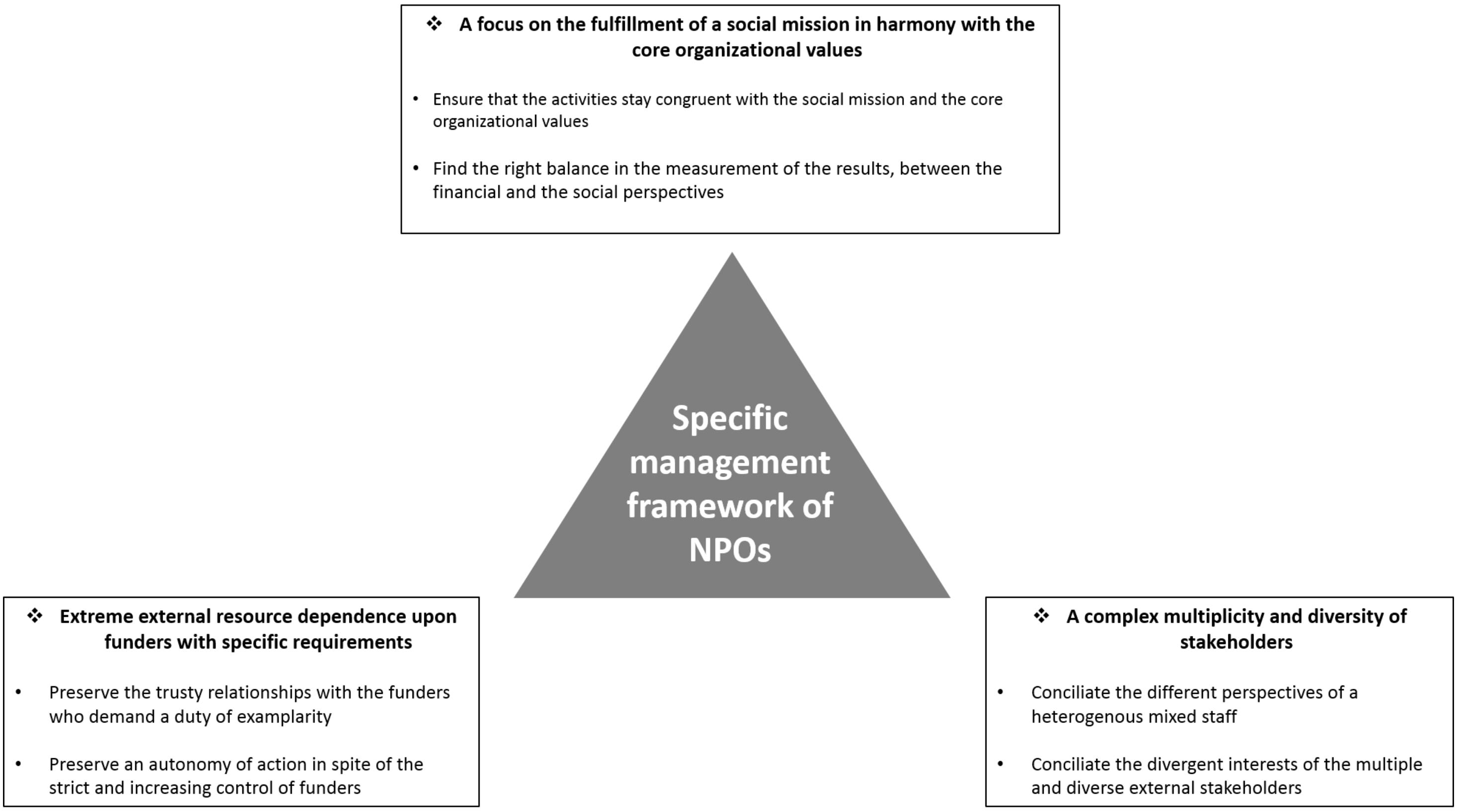
Externally, a high level of responsibility emerges from the different stakeholders' needs and requirements (Akingbola, 2013; Stone *et al.*, 1999). According to Hull and Lio (2006), nonprofit managers could face extreme levels of responsibility in their decision-making processes, especially when innovation opportunities arise. Among the responsibilities to external stakeholders, funders might require a particular focus because of NPOs' extreme dependence upon them.

2.3.3. Extreme external resource dependence upon funders whose expectations are different from investors in the for-profit sector

The survival of NPOs generally depends on the continuous support of external funders (Akingbola, 2013; Anheier, 2014, Ebrahim, 2002; Sargeant and Lee, 2002). Nonprofit managers have to deal with funders who are fundamentally different from investors in the for-profit sector. Indeed, any form of profit could be distributed to NPOs funders whether they are public or private. Nonetheless these funders demand that NPOs must be ethically irreproachable during the achievement of their social mission. Therefore, NPOs strive to maintain good relationships with these crucial external stakeholders. Nonprofit managers must address the critical issue of earning and preserving the trust of funders because NPOs are extremely dependent upon external resources (Anheier, 2014; Sargeant and Lee, 2002). The ethical duty to be irreproachable appears more and more complex because NPOs are increasingly controlled by watchdogs that strictly supervise their activities. Some authors underline also that these extreme external resource dependence could question the autonomy of NPOs vis-à-vis their funders (Akingbola, 2013; Anheier, 2014; Hull and Lio, 2006). Ebrahim (2002) goes further and suggests that this lack of autonomy could directly hamper the achievement of the social mission.

In summary, we have noted three main distinctive features of NPOs that imply specific management issues for them. Therefore, we used these three major features to outline the specific management framework of NPOs (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - The specific management framework of NPOs



Source: the authors

Thus, it appears theoretically necessary to take into consideration this specific management framework of NPOs to better understand the implementation of management innovation within these particular organizations.

Arguing that studies on the implementation of management innovation in NPOs are very scarce in the emerging literature on management innovation (not to say non-existent to our knowledge) whereas these organizations represent theoretically a specific unit of analysis, the following research question appears relevant:

What are the specific obstacles faced by the NPOs during the implementation of a management innovation?

3. METHOD

In this part, we justify the choice of using an in-depth case study to answer our research question. The case is then precisely detailed and the data collection and analysis is described.

3.1. An in-depth case study of an international nongovernmental organization

While most of the studies on innovation obstacles used quantitative methods, we chose rather a qualitative approach through the method of case study such as Ansari et al.,(2014), Dubouloz (2013) or Giuliani and Robert (2016). Management innovation is a little-known concept that represents a complex organizational phenomenon, a qualitative method is thus adapted (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2013). Thanks to a qualitative case study, we could deeply understand why some obstacles play an important role on the management innovation implementation in the specific context of NPOs. For several reasons, we focused on an in-depth case study of an International NonGovernmental Organization (INGO) with different internal unit of analysis, both the headquarters located in France and the international subsidiaries. First, this research strategy follows on Musca (2006) by studying multiple cases (here: headquarters and international subsidiaries) embedded in a unique overall case (here: the INGO). Musca (2006) argues that this research strategy is relevant to investigate deeply a process of innovation and organizational changes. Then, as this method allows us to consider the diverse contextual elements of multiple intra-organizational unit of analysis, it enhances the analytic generalization of the results (Yin, 2013). Second, we chose an INGO among the different types of NPOs because this field of investigation embodies the major characteristics of NPOs, the growth and professionalization of the nonprofit sector. For example, the number of INGOs doubled from 22,000 in 1990 to 56,000 in 2010 (Anheier, 2014). Finally, the international dimension during the selection of the NPO type appeared necessary to identify the potential obstacles related to the international dimension such as Ansari *et al*. (2014) who investigate the implementation of a management innovation in one multinational corporation.

3.2. Case presentation

To respect confidentiality requirements, we will name the INGO investigated as FAC. FAC was created in France in the 1980’s with the aim to address the issue of malnutrition around the world, particularly during and after disasters. FAC is an organization specialized in the problems associated with malnutrition through a global and lasting approach which tackles the causes of the malnutrition. In fact, FAC is both a humanitarian NGO and a development NGO. For the legal status, FAC is a publicly-recognized association under the French Law of 1901. The headquarters of FAC is located in Paris and FAC operates in 24 countries all over the world. The staff of FAC is composed of around 4000 employees (only 240 of them worked at the headquarters). In 2015, the annual budget of FAC reached around 160 M€.

Since the 1980’s, FAC has grown mainly thanks to the support of institutional funders.

Despite a recent trend by FAC to get funds from private donors, the survival of FAC still depends mostly on the support of institutional funders. Moreover, the internal functioning of FAC has been historically based on a strong centralization of power within the headquarters, with a strong control over the activity of the international subsidiaries. Because of the growth of the organization, this centralization has raised organizational and administrative problems with a double negative effect. The centralization slowed down the operational activity of the international missions, in particular because of the strict obligation to get systematically the validation of headquarters. This centralization also hampered the strategic activity of the headquarters, which focused on the micro-management of international field missions. This double negative effect has led simultaneously to some difficulties to fundraise, shortfalls in the operational realization of the international mission and a reduction of the staff motivation. In fact, the staff and especially the experienced staff with diverse experiences in several other organizations warned the top management that the historical centralization began to hamper seriously the development of FAC.

In 2009, FAC called upon consultants to lead investigations within the organization to help FAC to identify clearly the organizational problems. The results of the studies confirmed that the organizational problems come essentially from the centralization which created administrative burdens. The top management of FAC has been convinced by the argument of their experienced staff and the results of the consultant studies. Therefore, they decided to initiate a management innovation in the end of 2010: a process of decentralization inspired by the Anglo-Saxon model of INGO. FAC label it internally with a specific name. To respect confidentiality requirements, we will rename it “LEAD project” drawing on the four pillars (Leadership.Empowerement.Accountability.Development) of the management innovation that are officially promoted by the FAC.

The LEAD project corresponds to a systemic transformation of the organization through a decentralization of power from the headquarters to the international field teams to assign them more responsibilities and decision-making autonomy. This innovation aimed to increase the autonomy and empowerment of managers who operate in the international subsidiaries while developing their leadership and responsibilities. In parallel, the role of the staff within the headquarters in France was to turn more toward consulting and monitoring aspects than systematic, heavy-handed control of field activities. FAC wanted to promote the skills and expertise of the international staff by giving them more flexibility in the decision-making process.

The implementation of the management innovation began in 2011 with a pilot phase in four countries during 1 year. After this experimentation, FAC noted positive feedbacks to follow the decentralization and noticed some little adjustments to operate for the general implementation. For instance, FAC observed that some of the international teams did not enough considerate the importance of the issues related to external accountability toward stakeholders. This is why, they modified one of the pillar of the management innovation. Originally, the "A" of the LEAD project was "Autonomy" but they removed it to "Accountability". It was a way to sensitize about this important issue while the notion of "autonomy" was in fact already integrated in the two other pillars "Leadership" and "Empowerment". Practically, they decided to avoid from going to a total absence of control. They prefer enhance the flexibility by reducing the headquarters validation before any project while promoting regular general audit over longer periods. Other example, the experimentation revealed some misunderstandings from the staff to carry out the new managerial model. Consequently, FAC has elaborated official "management guidelines" which describe more precisely the concrete impact of the management innovation on their daily work. Then FAC designate some internal instructors who made rounds of the international subsidiaries to explain it.

As the pilot phase was overall a success, FAC decided in 2012 to continue and implement their management innovation within all their international subsidiaries. Progressively, international teams received concretely more autonomy and develop their leadership. Organizational charts, official project management guidelines, job descriptions, were also extensively adapted to integrate the new decision-making process. In practice, international teams had more decision making in the human resources management. For example, international teams could recruit local staff without the validation of the headquarters and were more involved to the recruitment of the expatriates. International teams were also more autonomous for the definition of humanitarian strategies to develop or not in their country. Thus, they were more independent to respond to the call of projects of fundraisers thanks to a considerable reduction of the need to validate it by the headquarters. Besides new job positions have emerged to assist in the implementation of these significant organizational changes such as a field coordinators or risk managers. Since the beginning of the overall implementation in 2012, the management innovation has been now effectively adopted in the headquarters and the majority of international subsidiaries. Nonetheless, the financial department has fallen behind on the other departments concerning the implementation of the new organizational model. Thus, the financial department has adopted partially the principles of the LEAD. Consequently, FAC is currently implementing a final "TOTAL LEAD" project intended to the financial department so that it can catch up the others. Except this issue, the implementation of the LEAD is now well effective.

The degree of "newness" was at the organizational level because this type of management innovation has been new for FAC but the decentralization is not new to state-of-the-art management (Mol and Birkinshaw, 2014; Volberda *et al*., 2014). The decentralization process of FAC aimed to be systemic because it tended to involve all the functions of the organization (Mol and Birkinshaw, 2014).

A decentralization process has been explicitly labelled as a management innovation by several authors. Building on the example of the firm *Wellington Insurance*, Birkinshaw & Mol (2006) identified the decentralization process as one of the most remarkable management innovations of these recent decades which embody the concrete forms of management innovation. Then, Armbruster et al. (2008) considered a decentralization process as an overall indicator that helps to identify if a firm has adopted a management innovation or not. This indicator is "*the decentralization of planning, operating and controlling functions*". So do the Community Innovation Survey (2012). It takes the example of the decentralization to illustrate one of the three types of management innovation they used to lead their European survey : "*During the three years 2010 to 2012, did your enterprise introduce […] 2) new methods of organizing work responsibilities and decision making (i.e first use of a new system of employee responsibilities, teamwork, decentralization, integration or de-integration of departments, education/training system)*" (CIS 2012, p.9).

3.3. Data collection and analysis

The investigation was based on both primary and secondary data. We have conducted semi-structured interviews from January 2015 to October 2016 with a selection of four different unit of analysis. The first one refers to the investigation of the headquarters in France. Then the second and the third one represent two international subsidiaries in two different countries that present different contextual elements (date of the beginning of the activity in the country, size, budget, cultural and political environment). For each international subsidiary, we investigate both the top management team located at the capital of the country and the middle management located across the country in different cities called "bases". The middle managers of the "bases" across the country are under the supervision of the top management team located at the capital of the country. The last one does not deal with the distinction between headquarters in France and international subsidiaries but refers to the actors who had an official function explicitly related to the implementation of the management innovation. This condition means that the job descriptions of these actors must integrate missions which are directly related to the supervision of the management innovation implementation (at the headquarters or in the international subsidiaries). We will call them the "innovation supervisors". For each unit of analysis we have sampled the profiles of the interviewees with respect to a diversification of the function and the hierarchical position. In total, 31 semi-structured interviews have been conducted and lasted one hour in average. We have detailed this collection of primary data in the following table (Table 2). The results of the interviews have led to a mixed thematic coding using both an *à-priori* and inductive method (Saubesty, 2006). On the one hand, we defined a general pre-established plan that we structured in accordance with the subcategories of obstacles identified in the literature. On the other hand, we integrate inductive thematic codes in these *à-priori* subcategories or we were also open to new inductive subcategories. Then we tried to identify the most important obstacles in terms of the number of occurrences depending on the different actors' perception.

Table 2 - The collection of primary data with 31 semi-structured interviews

Unit of analysis	Sample of the profiles interviewed
Headquarters in France	- 2 Regional Director of Operations - Head of the pool "Emergency Operations" - Human Resources Director - Middle manager in human resource management - Risk Manager - Middle manager of social and administrative issues - Representative of the Hygiene, Safety and Working Conditions Committee
International subsidiary 1 + International subsidiary 2	- Country Director - Deputy Country Director in charge of operations programs - Deputy Country Director in charge of support functions - Program Head of Department (located in the capital of the country with the top management) - Support function Head of Department (located in the capital of the country with the top management) - Middle program Manager (located in one "base" across the country) - Middle Support function Manager (located in one "base" across the country) - Field coordinator (located in a one "base" and in charge of the coordination with the staff located at the capital)
"Innovation supervisors"	- 2 members of the steering committee who supervised the implementation of management innovation - General Director of Operations - Director of one of the international subsidiaries which participates to the pilot phase - 2 project managers assigned to "the implementation of the management innovation" (one in headquarters and one moving in different international subsidiaries) - Internal instructor of the management innovation implementation (moving in different international subsidiaries)

Then, we have triangulated these primary data with the collection of secondary data, especially from a plenty of internal documents. Indeed we had access to a number of archives such as the detailed reports of the pilot phase experimented in four countries or the minutes of the meetings organized by the steering committee of the management innovation implementation. Moreover we had also access to documents that proves the concrete implementation of the management innovation such as the significant evolution of organizational charts, job descriptions or project management guidelines. Finally, we have also analyzed the external documents such as the official annual reports and the institutional website.

4. RESULTS

In this part, we present the results of our investigation that have been classified in the general categories that are internal and external obstacles.

4.1. INTERNAL OBSTACLES

4.1.1. A high staff turnover

Most of the headquarters staff and the “innovation supervisors” have spontaneously claimed that the high turnover of FAC make the implementation of the LEAD project very difficult. The LEAD project is a long term project which requires a learning process step by step whereas the staff and especially the international staff frequently change. Then it has been hard for the headquarters teams and the “innovation supervisors” to achieve the decentralization process while they are dealing with different people at the different steps of the implementation process. The interviewees indicate that the differences of the changing staff in terms of experience, skills or even personality lead to a systematic starting over at the first step of the new learning process. We have noticed that this analysis has been also highlighted in the minutes of the LEAD steering committee meetings. Moreover, several interviewees wish to point out that the high staff turnover is inherent to the sector of NPOs all the more that there are much less suitable candidates than job advertisements in the nonprofit job market. Therefore, FAC has to tackle an issue of a high turnover which is accentuated by the difficulty to find a successor. The complex issue of the nonprofit job market leads also to a lack of skilled employee that affect the implementation of the management innovation.

4.1.2. A lack of skilled employee.

The headquarters teams, the innovations supervisors and to a lesser extent some of international teams have also underlined that they have to face with a lack of skilled employee. They have underlined that the staff of FAC is generally very skilled for technical work. They explained that there is yet a gap of competences in transverse activities such as team and budget management or strategies definitions. However the LEAD project requires these competences from the international staff. Indeed, the interviewees suggest that it was hard to achieve successfully the decentralization process which tends to give more responsibility and autonomy to the international staff whereas they have only technical skills. They added that this lack of transverse competences could be a result of the difficulty to recruit both technical and transversal skilled candidates in the nonprofit job market where this profile is highly demanded and rare.

4.1.3 A lack of financial resources

Most of the international teams have claimed that the lack of financial resources has slowed down the implementation of the LEAD project in their country. Both international top managers and middle managers have agreed that having theoretically more responsibilities and decision-making is not sufficient. Nevertheless, they needed more financial flexibility to get concretely a better room for maneuver that would develop their autonomy and leadership. They affirm that they could not implement the new management model in their subsidiary without more resources allocated. They explained it by the poor ratio between the internal “equity capital” of FAC (funds from private donators) and the “institutional funds” (from institutional funders). One of the problem associated with the “institutional funds” is that they are very often limited to a short period and their renewal is not guaranteed. Given the high dependence of FAC on the inconsistent institutional subsidies, the headquarters staff argued that it was harder to have a financial long term perspective to allocate more resources for the countries in order to implement the LEAD project. We have checked this high dependence on institutional funds with the analysis of the official annual reports. Nevertheless, FAC tried to progressively give more resource flexibility to the international subsidiaries by allocating to them more “equity capital”.

4.1.4. A lack of clarity and accuracy of the LEAD

Both the headquarters and international teams have claimed that the transition of the LEAD project from the theoretical presentation to the practical implementation have been largely source of misunderstandings. They underlined that the LEAD project lacked from formalization to define precisely the new scope of their activities and the new decision making process. They claimed that the LEAD project was built on new management orientations and principles which was too generic without going into details and dealing with specific situations. Therefore, international managers faced a number of complex situations in the field in which they did not know how to react, to what extent they have the responsibility to take the decisions? Should they ask the headquarters for a validation? They did not clearly know in which situations the principles of the LEAD project could be applicable. The headquarters staff have also been affected by the lack of clarity and accuracy. They did not know under which conditions they could move from a "controller" role to an "advisor" role toward the international staff. Following on these statements, we noted also during the analysis of the internal documents that at the beginning of the implementation, the LEAD project was generic and not enough formalized to guide precisely managers during the implementation. Progressively, FAC developed detailed guidelines and assigned internal instructors to train the international staff.

4.1.5. A lack of a real systemic scope

Although the implementation of the LEAD project should involve in theory all the departments of the organization, the results of the interviews revealed that the implementation of the LEAD project has taken a very long time to be systemic. In the early years of the implementation, the LEAD project has only been adopted by the operation department and very few by the support functions and especially the financial department which maintain a centralization model. For example, we noticed that the steering committee of the LEAD project include very few representatives of the support function departments at the beginning of the implementation. However the different departments (operations and support functions) work closely together at the headquarters as well as the international subsidiaries. Thus, the coexistence of the new and still the old management model lead to new organizational problems and brake the implementation of the new management model. The support functions tried to catch up these recent years.

4.2. External obstacles

4.2.1 A high external accountability

Regarding the external obstacles that make the implementation of the LEAD project more difficult, we noticed nearly a consensus about the external accountability toward the external stakeholders. Both the headquarters and the international staff as well as the innovation supervisors evoked the external accountability, especially toward beneficiaries, funders and local authorities in subsidiaries. The interviews expressed a wide concern on the risk of decreasing the quality of the assistance toward beneficiaries. Indeed, the headquarters staff found it hard to give more responsibilities and decision making to international staff because they thought that less control would be synonymous with a drop of the quality of the social mission achievement. They put emphasis on this concern all the more that FAC are known to be an NGO with a high technical expertise. They were even worried about a serious failure which could affect widely the achievement of the social missions. They explained that a decrease of the quality or a serious failure caused by the significant organizational and administrative changes could have major negative impact for FAC. On the one hand, FAC is a humanitarian NGO which operates in very complex social context where beneficiaries are vulnerable people. Thus, FAC tries to be very careful to avoid a serious failure that could affect directly the vulnerable people. On the other hand, a decrease of the quality or a serious failure could damage the external reputation of FAC. Thus, it could harm their external relationships with funders while the survival of the NGO is highly dependent on them.

During our analysis of several internal documents, we have noticed that after the pilot phase, one of the official pillars of the LEAD (Leadership Empowerment Autonomy and Development) project has been modified. In fact, the official pillar "Autonomy" has been replaced by "Accountability". This change aimed at sensitizing about the concern of external accountability for the implementation of the management innovation.

4.2.2. International disparities about the education level and cultural practices of the local staff, and the security risks of the country.

The results of the interviews have highlighted the difficulty to implement the LEAD project in the international subsidiaries because of the education level of the local staff which could vary significantly from a country to another. Admittedly, the international staff of FAC is composed of expatriates but also local staff recruited directly in the country of the subsidiary. Moreover, they faced also with the different cultural practices inherent to the country. The cultural practices of some countries could be antagonist to the implementation of the LEAD project as well as the cultural mindset of others could be totally in line with the philosophy of the new management model. Given these educational and cultural disparities between the different countries, FAC take into consideration these variables to implement progressively and appropriately the LEAD in function of the context but with respect to the generic key principles.

In addition, the results outlined an obstacle related to the security risks of the country which are variable depending on the situation of the international subsidiary. They suggest that the level of autonomy and decision-making of the international teams had to be adapted with the level of the security risks. The international staff pointed out this obstacle in a lesser extent, claiming that they collaborate with local people who have a very good knowledge of the country.

To conclude, we have summarized our results in a table (Table 3). We have underlined the importance level of the obstacle in accordance with the different actors interviewed. Some examples of quotes are also reported.

Table 3 - A summary of the obstacles to the implementation of the management innovation in FAC

A high staff turnover	
- Headquarters (+++) - Top managers in international subsidiaries (++) - Middle managers in international subsidiaries (++) - "Innovation supervisors" (+++)	"*As all the other NGOs, we face with the problem of a high staff turnover of our sector. It was quite difficult … not to say very difficult, to begin the implementation of the LEAD knowing that you international collaborator could change in 3 or 6 months!*" (Middle manager in human resource management, headquarters)
A lack of skilled employee	
- Headquarters (+++) - Top managers in international subsidiaries (++) - Middle managers in international subsidiaries (+) - "Innovation supervisors" (+++)	"*With the steering committee, we noticed that our manager are technically expert but only a minority of them are as skilled in transverse and specific managerial activities. Even if we want to recruit more this such profile externally, it is very hard because they are rare in the job market of our sector*" (Member of the Steering committee, "Innovation supervisors")
A lack of financial resources	
- Headquarters (+) - Top managers in international subsidiaries (+++) - Middle managers in international subsidiaries (+++) - "Innovation supervisors" (+)	*"I totally agree with the principles of the LEAD but how you could put them into practice without more financial flexibility? It's impossible even if I could understand that in an NGO the funds are fluctuant …"* (Support function Head of Department, IS1)
A lack of clarity and accuracy of the LEAD	
- Headquarters (+++) - Top managers in international subsidiaries (++) - Middle managers in international subsidiaries (+++) - "Innovation supervisors" (+)	"*We did not know precisely what we could do or not with this new organization… As a manager I did not know exactly when and in what extent I could apply the general principles of the LEAD* " (Program Manager, IS2)
A lack of a real systemic scope	
- Headquarters (+++) - Top managers in international subsidiaries (+++) - Middle managers in international subsidiaries (++) - "Innovation supervisors" (+)	"*How do you want to collaborate with other departments that have not implemented the LEAD?? We were not with on the same wavelength so the LEAD could not progress*" (Program Head of department, IS1)
A high external accountability	
- Headquarters (+++) - Top managers in international subsidiaries (++) - Middle managers in international subsidiaries (++) - "Innovation supervisors" (+++)	"*Our external accountability is one of our priority and we have to be very careful internally to respect it during our activities. The LEAD project raised some major concerns about it so that it brakes its implementation*" (Regional Director of Operations, headquarters)

International disparities about the education level and cultural practices of the local staff, and the security risks of the country.	
- Headquarters (+++) - Top managers in international subsidiaries (++) - Middle managers in international subsidiaries (+) - "Innovation supervisors" (+++)	"*FAC such as the majority of the other NGOs could lead missions in very complex countries with a high degree of insecurity. It is difficult to implement similarly the LEAD in these countries compared to the other more or less stable countries where we are present too*" (Risk Manager, headquarters)

(+++): high importance; (++): medium importance, (+): low importance

5. DISCUSSION

In this part, we discuss firstly the results of our investigation in line with the NPOs specificities. Then, we compare precisely the different actors' perception of the obstacles. The comparison reveals the interest of discussing also the results with the potential issue of gaps between rhetoric and reality and cultural misfits.

In the emerging studies on the obstacles of management innovation implementation within firms, scholars have put an emphasis on the internal obstacles and especially on the issue of human resource management (Ansari et al., 2014; Birkinshaw *et al*., 2008; Dubouloz, 2013; Giuliani and Robert, 2016; Giuliani *et al*., 2017; Madrid-Guijaro *et al*. , 2009, Wagner *et al*., 2011). More precisely, Madrid-Guijaro (2009) and Dubouloz (2013) pointed out the lack of competences of the staff as an obstacle of the implementation of management innovation.

First, we have also noted the lack of competences in NPOs but it appeared as a major obstacle while Dubouloz (2013) stated that this obstacle remains weak at the implementation phase within firms. The importance of this lack of competences in NPOs could be the result of the specific nonprofit job market where recruiting a manager with both technical and managerial skills is still very difficult. Indeed, such profiles remains rare, maybe because the professionalization of the sector is still too recent (Anheier, 2014, Hwang & Powell, 2009). Indeed, the recent growth and professionalization of the nonprofit sector have led to larger organizations facing new management issues. For instance, NPOs have now to integrate support functions departments (accounting, marketing, human resources,…) and the development of a middle management. It could explain why the lack of competences appeared more as a critical obstacle compared to firms which are more professional and familiar with managerial issues.

Second, we have identified a new obstacle related to the human resource management: the high staff turnover. This obstacle has not been suggested before in the few studies dealing with implementation of management innovation within firms. A considerable number of actors have claimed during our investigation that the high staff turnover is specifically inherent to the nonprofit job market. However, the nonprofit literature has yet not identified the high staff turnover as a specific feature of NPOs. This finding raises a future research avenue to check the validity of this supposition. The high staff turnover could be the result of the presence of volunteers and short-term volunteers while firms did not integrate this form of work (Kreutzer and Jäger, 2011; Sanders and Mcclellan, 2014). Moreover, the nonprofit staff could be instable because of the difficulty of their working conditions. As the primary aim of NPOs is to address a social issue, the nonprofit staff often deal with a complex environment (Anheier, 2014). Admittedly, the staff of firms face also complex working conditions but firms have more levers than NPOs to retain their staff such as the possibility to allow high wages or rewards. In NPOs, high wages and rewards are still negatively perceived (Akingbola, 2013; Ridder and McCandless, 2010). Moreover, the human resource strategies are academically and practically more developed for firms than NPOs where the emergence of support functions is still recent (Akingbola, 2013, Anheier, 2014, Ridder and McCandless, 2010).

Besides, Dubouloz (2013) found that the lack of financial resources was not a significant obstacle in the implementation of management innovation within firms. In contrary, our results show that the lack of financial resources is a main issue for NPOS which affect the implementation process. One of the main distinction between NPOs and firms are the presence of shareholders. Contrary to firms, NPOs cannot have shareholders or any form of owner. The survival of NPOs are principally dependent on the support of external funders (Anheier, 2014, Ebrahim, 2002; Sargeant and Lee, 2002). Consequently this specific type of organization lack of “equity capital” and have to draw on the inconsistence of the external funds. This result could rather complement Madrid Guijaro et al. (2009) who identified more generally the difficult access to funds for Spanish SME as a barrier of management innovation.

Some studies put on the light that a negative internal perception of the management innovation could be an obstacle to its implementation (Duboulouz, 2013; Giuliani and Robert, 2016; Giuliani *et al.*, 2017; Madrid-Guijaro *et al.* , 2009, Wagner *et al.*, 2011). As we underscored that the perception of a lack of clarity and accuracy in the redefinition of the role and the activities could be an obstacle, our results follow on Wagner *et al.* (2011). Our investigation shows that the negative perception of the management innovation could also result from a lack of a systemic scope. Mol and Birkinshaw (2014) noted that the management innovation could involve one discrete function or be systemic across all the organization. Building on this distinction, our results suggest that it is harder to implement a management innovation without a systemic scope.

Moreover, NPOs have admittedly no shareholders but they have to deal with several stakeholders. The nonprofit sector is organized holistically so that NPOs face a high accountability toward a multiplicity of stakeholders from the funders to the beneficiaries (Anheier, 2014; Hull and Lio, 2006; Stone *et al.*, 1999). Our investigation within NPOs revealed that their high accountability toward external stakeholders could slow down the implementation of the management innovation. This obstacle has not been highlighted in the previous researches on firms which are primarily focused on the expectations of shareholders who own the firms. It could explain why the duty of accountability toward external stakeholders may affect NPOs more than firms during the implementation of management innovation. One of the major external stakeholders' requirement is an irreproachable fulfillment of their mission so that the social mission statement must be strictly respected and the use of the funds allocated strictly justified (Anheier, 2014; Ebrahim, 2002; Hull and Lio, 2006).

Regarding the international perspective, our results follows on Ansari *et al*. (2014) and Volberda *et al*. (2014) who highlight the tensions related to a standardized implementation of management innovation within subsidiaries of multinational corporations. Our investigation in an INGO provide some additional details. Our results specified that disparities between the countries about educational level and cultural practices but also about security risks make the implementation more difficult and lead to some local adaptations.

Furthermore, when we compare the importance level of the obstacles in function of the different actors investigated (see table 3), it appears also relevant to discuss some results in the light of potential gaps between rhetoric and reality (Zbaracki, 1998) or cultural misfits (Ansari et al., 2010, 2014).

First, the lack of skilled employee is an obstacle more perceived by the headquarters and the "innovation supervisors" than the international teams. This result could in fact express a gap between rhetoric and reality. Maybe, the headquarters teams are not totally ready to apply practically the theoretical principles of the management innovation which decentralize their authority to the international teams. This is why, the headquarters teams used this argument of the lack of competences to avoid giving more autonomy to the international teams and keep control upon them. Moreover, the issues of external accountability and international disparities about educational level, cultural practices and security risks could also be considered as rhetoric arguments provided by the headquarters teams to keep the control. We noticed that these both issues are more expressed by the headquarters teams than the international teams.

Alongside, the lack of financial resources is an obstacle more perceived by the international teams that the headquarters or the "innovation supervisors". Once again, this different perception could actually result from a gap between rhetoric and reality. On the one hand, the "innovation supervisors" are in a rhetoric approach. Admittedly they claimed officially for more autonomy allocated to international teams whereas they took a long time to take into consideration the concrete needs such as giving them more financial flexibility. On the other hand, the headquarters teams took advantage of this gap between rhetoric and reality about the financial flexibility to keep the control. This is why they don't highlight so much this obstacle.

Besides, we could also think that a cultural misfit may underlie these gaps between rhetoric and reality. The organization studied had a very strong hierarchical culture before it decides to implement more democratic practices. The centralized managerial culture has been rooted for almost thirty years in the organization. This is why the different actors tried to stay on a rhetoric approach that is profitable for them to postpone the concrete application of the management innovation principles in the reality. These difficulties to change due to cultural misfits concern the headquarters teams as well as international teams. Indeed, we noted that both of them insist more on a lack of clarity, accuracy and systemic scope of the management innovation than the "innovation supervisors". We could consider that if the actors at the first line of the concrete implementation (headquarters and international teams) feel confused during the implementation, it could more refer to a cultural misfit with their historical centralized organizational culture. This is why the implementation of a management innovation could be very long because it affects the core managerial culture and the social system rooted for years. Thus, the implementation of management innovation should be progressive as we noticed during our investigation in FAC.

6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This paper could also provide some helpful insights for nonprofit managers to achieve successfully the implementation of a management innovation. Indeed, the results indicate the potential obstacles that nonprofit managers could face if they decided to implement a management innovation. Thus, they could anticipate and take preventive actions to avoid them pro-actively. The human resource department has to play an important role that could stimulate a virtuous circle. Before the implementation, they could define a specific long-term human resource strategy whose main objectives are to reduce the high staff turnover and develop the managerial skills of its internal staff. Concretely, they could collaborate with the other departments to set up specific programs with a double dimension: train their technical manager to the managerial activities while rewarding them to win their loyalty. Admittedly it will prevent from the high staff turnover and the lack of skilled employees which complicate the implementation of management innovation, but it will have other indirect positive effects. These programs will increase the collaboration of the human resource department with the other departments. Then, it could be the first stone of the development of cross-functional teams knowing that cross functional teams could facilitate a systemic implementation of the management innovation. Besides, these specific loyalty and training programs will lead to more experienced and skilled staff. Then, nonprofit managers could more quietly qualify their systematic control in spite of their concerns about the high accountability toward external stakeholders. Finally, nonprofit managers have to understand that the implementation of a management innovation is a long term project. They should not speed up and plan the implementation step by step. It would prevent from an implementation that could appear abrupt. Thus, nonprofit managers could reduce the effects of potential cultural misfits.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this article, we identified the specific obstacles faced by NPOs during the implementation of a management innovation. The results provide new obstacles for the research on management innovation implementation such as the high staff turnover or the high external accountability. Moreover, we noted that the presence of the identified obstacles in NPOs could be explained by some core features of the nonprofit context. Thus, the link between the identified obstacles and the nonprofit specificities which are highlighted in the literature could justify a potential generalization to all NPOs. In addition, it emphasizes that NPOs have still significant differences in nature that distinguish them from firms, in spite of the trend of NPOs to be business-like. Without neglecting that the NPOs constitute a specific management framework, the results could also be discussed in another perspective. The comparison of the different actors' perceptions of the obstacles could potentially reveal that the identified obstacles could be related to generic problems that are gaps between rhetoric and reality and cultural misfits.

This is why, future studies should check the relevance of the specific identified obstacles. Scholars could use quantitative methods to measure and compare the significance of each obstacle identified in this article. After the identification of the obstacles, future empirical studies should focus on how to overcome them? Should NPO's use internal or external levers to do so? Finally, future studies should examine the impact of management innovation implementation on the NPOs performance. In this case, researchers will also be confronted to the issues on how to measure the NPOs performance and which indicators they could use for NPOs

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