Open-access Management Research at a Turning Point: Giving Relevance to a Stigmatized Object

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In this short piece, we start by briefly discussing why the model chosen by M@n@gement – free-to-submit, free-to-publish and free-to-read – remains a relevant template, indeed perhaps more relevant today than ever. Despite these assets, our model must compete with other open-access outlets, and contend with negative perceptions, on the part of academics and the general public, of the distance taken by research from its practical impact. We discuss this multidimensional stigma and consider how we, as a community of management researchers, can overcome these challenges to make open-access research sustainable and impactful.

M@n@gement is 20 years old. It was founded in an age when the role of the internet and the digital aspects of our lives were still a novelty. At that time the "at" symbol (arobase in French), was as fashionable as the latest pair of sneakers. Yet nowadays, we are told that the name of the journal is pretty uncool, to which we answer that it is the new trend that is old-fashioned. In fact, reminding colleagues of the arobase is very useful for helping them recall the journal. It does not make us less proud to work every day for the ideal at the origin of the journal. Former editors, authors and reviewers can be proud of M@n@gement as it now takes stock of 20 years of research and notable contributions in the areas of organization theory, strategy and international business (Maucuer & Renault, this issue). Does all of this mean that the journal has reached the age of reason?

M@N@GEMENT, 20 YEARS COUNTING, STILL A RELEVANT MODEL?

M@n@gement remains unique in the field of open-access journals (see Forgues & Liarte, 2013 for a brief history) beyond the essential attribute that it is readable and accessible for free. First, there is no fee to submit or publish papers in our journal (what are euphemistically called "articles processing charges"), contrary to a number of existing open-access journals such as PLOS One, SAGE Open, or Cogent. In this light, our journal considers itself to be one of the only fully open-access outlets in the field – independent researchers and academics in emerging economies who do not necessarily have access to institutional resources are welcome to contribute to the journal, free of charge. This reflects again the openness on which our journal is based.

The journal is independent of all editorial behemoths that have been so decried in the past few years. The only institutional link the journal has is with its association – l'Association Internationale de Management Strategique (AIMS – the French-speaking International Society for Strategic Management). Since 2018, the journal is also financially supported by CNRS (the French National Centre for Scientific Research). It functions only thanks to the funding of these organizations (used to finance

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a copy editor, our website and our submission platform) and the voluntary work of the editorial team (who do not receive any honoraria, as would be expected in other major management journals). We tend to remind our reviewers that, when they give their time to evaluate work submitted to our journal, they volunteer for their community of researchers and not for a private business.

M@n@gement is a bilingual journal and sees itself as a gateway for French thinking to permeate the global field of management research and, inversely, as a receptacle for international work that will find particular resonance in the French community. It publishes all papers in English and considers manuscripts in French. From its start, the journal has endeavoured to provide authors with high-quality feedback and a fair process. The expectations of the journal are high, but the overall quality of work being produced in France and across the world is also rising. We oppose any academic Malthusianism: we want to publish rigorous and innovative research, and all work that meets our standards is admitted. We do not artificially maintain a low acceptance rate to use as a status signalling instrument.

We believe that the model of M@n@gement remains valid and consistent with the expanding era of the sharing economy (Acquier, Daudigeos & Pinkse, 2017): we offer an independent journal, freely accessible and funded by a professional association. Why would the Academy of Management not consider making their journals open access, too? They have the financial capacity to do so, being the major association in the field of management. They benefit from an already established infrastructure – one of the major challenges, alongside legitimacy, to the growth of open-access journals (Forgues & Liarte, 2013).

THE STIGMA OF OPEN ACCESS: RECONCILING TRUE ACCESS AND QUALITY

When academics think about open-access journals, they tend to think about predatory or vanity publishing – outlets that publish anything in exchange for a fee. Those predatory outlets have legitimized themselves by calling themselves open access (making junk science freely available does not make it worthier) and thereby perverted the reputation of the movement. "Legitimate" open-access journals can suffer courtesy stigma by being associated with peers that are not as virtuous (Shymko & Roulet, 2017). Competing outlets, supported by private editorial companies, tend to play on those categorization errors to disregard open-access journals. It also seems that some people strive to discredit open-access journals, especially in social sciences. Last spring, we received a series of fake submissions: papers that look like real research articles at first glance, but revealed themselves to be merely sophisticated juxtaposition of sentences and data upon further reading. These repeated submissions stopped only when we contacted the various fake authors to complain that dealing with their submissions took time and disturbed our efforts to promote quality in open-access journals.

Indeed, and contrary to the aforementioned stigma, M@n@gement has chosen from the outset to build on a rigorous and selective process of publishing. We have never traded access against quality. We would like here to spotlight the importance of the academic conversation that takes place between authors, reviewers and the associate editors around each of the papers that go through the publishing process of M@n@gement. This only functions because we can count on the devotion and hard work of our reviewers and associate editors, whose voluntary service is consistent with

our positioning as an open-access journal. Our careful selection of reviewers is driven by the will to create the best academic conversation possible, encompassing empirical, theoretical, methodological and writing style considerations. Most of our reviewers are experienced researchers, with work published in renowned international journals, who manage to give a bit of their very scarce time for our journal. We are very grateful to them. Of course, it is not always easy to find three perfect matches for every paper we send for review – nevertheless, our average of 2.8 reviewers per paper this year is a source of great pride. Our review process has gained the reputation of being developmental, and as a result growing numbers of young researchers send us promising articles coming out of their dissertations, learning a lot through the exercise. Overall, this process ensures that all accepted academic articles have gone through a sound and developmental conversation between peers, which renders the journal quite consistent in terms of quality.

Like every academic journal, we feel the pressure to shorten the review process and the time to publish after first submission. Of course, this pursuit is legitimate, and some top journals now provide incredibly short rounds and review processes. Once again, we do not want to risk trading pace for quality. One way to deal with this while continuing to increase the quality of our process has been to increase the number of associate editors who bring their expertise and network of potential reviewers to the journal. Eight associate editors now directly manage their own streams of submissions. Aside from some rare outliers, the average time for first decision is 67 days for papers sent for review, and less than 10 days for desk rejected papers, on average. Furthermore, being an online journal considerably reduces the time between final acceptance and publication, which makes our process relatively fast in comparison to other journals. Another reason for pride!

We see our open-access approach as a tool to attract good submissions and good authors for those who are concerned about the accessibility and the shared ownership of scientific knowledge. While rankings have limited interest in the financial models and ideals of a journal, we hope to endogenously continue raising the quality of the work we publish by making open access one of our main selling points at a time when major publishing models are challenged. In a post-truth era (Kurchaki, 2016; McIntyre, 2018) where the frontier between opinion pieces and scientific articles is fuzzier than ever, high-quality open-access research is needed.

THE STIGMA OF MANAGEMENT RESEARCH: RECONCILING RIGOUR AND RELEVANCE?

Increasing the reach of open-access research within the academic community is not enough, and more importantly it does not fully benefit from the accessibility of open-access science. Open-access research must not only reach remote academic communities but also the broader public, thereby becoming more impactful. In fact, the impact of management research has been a central concern for universities and schools because of the cost it involves. How can the work we do be useful to managers and organizations? To public policy? The open access movement – by making research directly available – has the potential to contribute to solving the world's most pressing problems, on the condition the research produced is made intelligible and digestible for stakeholders.

As noted by Hamet and Maurer (2017), management research is still only scarcely visible outside of academia – in particular, there is very little

media coverage for the work we do, partly due the generic but also heterogeneous drivers of media attention (Roulet & Clemente, 2018). Despite this lack of visibility, it is clear that management research has a lot to offer to tackle grand challenges (Bothello & Roulet, Forthcoming). Efforts to make management research relevant and visible are numerous (see, for example, the efforts of the Revue Francaise de Gestion – Denis, 2017 – or of the Strategic Management Journal, which now publishes a practitioner-oriented abstract with each paper). In this context, the relevance of management research is a vivid debate (Mangematin & Belkhouja, 2015; Carton & Mouricou, 2017).

At our level, several initiatives aim at increasing our impact on a broader audience. First, we have recently made efforts to promote M@n@gement on social media. The journal now has its own twitter account (@Management_Aims) with more than 1300 followers. For a number of years, we have also promoted alternative formats to convey new ideas. Our "Unplugged" section, edited by Olivier Germain, has published dozens of original pieces that explore new expression modes to attract readers: Sketches (De Vaujany, 2016), movies comments (Picard, 2016), poems (Palpacuer, 2019), reflexive pieces of management gurus on their works (Mintzberg, 2015), short pieces like the recent 1000 words series (Aumais et al., 2018) – so many novel ways to convey ideas to diverse sensitivities and audiences. Finally, we are convinced that strategic intermediaries, such as professional media, consulting companies, think-and-do tanks, business labs, or foundations, can play an important role in translating management and strategy research for practitioners and diffusing it to a broader audience. Our collaboration with The Conversation is just a small step in this direction.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

In their statistical and bibliometric analysis of the first 20 years of M@n@gement, Renaud and Maucuer show the extent to which our journal has managed to cover a broad array of questions and theories in strategic management and organizational theory (Renaud and Maucuer, this issue). All past editors succeeded in attracting papers covering the pressing issues of their time. The recent special issue on critical performativity (Huault, Kärreman, Perret & Spicer, 2017) is a case in point of how M@n@gement plays its part in vivid international academic debates. The article by Renaud and Maucuer also underlines the areas in which there is room for improvement, most notably the weakness of internal citation and hence internal academic conversation.[1]

Several articles in this special issue cover concepts and theories that M@n@gement has pushed forward in the past. The essay by Demil, Lecocq and Warnier elaborates on how the notions of business ecosystems and more broadly "business model thinking" change the way we think about and experience the strategic environment of organizations (Demil, Lecocq & Warnier, this issue). On their side, Cabantous and Sergi delineate a new horizon for performativity studies (Aggeri, 2017) by initiating a dialogue with process studies. More specifically, they contend that a processuality mindset could help performativity studies address three key challenges, namely: avoiding over-simplistic causal and linear reasoning, characterizing performativity processes and providing evidence of performativity (Cabantous & Sergi this issue).

1. A rare exception is the debate between Peton and Pezé and Daudigeos, Boutinot and Jaumier in 2015 (Peton & Pezé, 2015; Daudigeos, Boutinot & Jaumier, 2015).

The two following articles contradict conventional managerial wisdom and highlight interesting counterintuitive findings. Bardon and Josserand discuss the popular notion of management innovations and contest the idea that they should be considered as one-size-fits-all best practices (Bardon & Josserand this issue). On the contrary, they revisit the Foucauldian heritage in critical management studies to propose a research agenda on management innovations and the conditions necessary to foster dialogue between researchers and practitioners on this matter. Välikangas and Tienari question the emphasis placed on authenticity in leadership today. Their analysis of several vignettes about the role of humour in CEOs' work in different industries illustrates how authenticity in the strict sense of the word is not compatible with this work.

Four papers in this special issue advance the research agenda of institutional theory, whose development has always been echoed within M@n@gement (for instance, see Dansou & Langley, 2012; Friedland, 2012; Scott, 2014). Two articles relate to organizational hybridity. In her essay, Battilana reviews recent organizational research on social enterprises. She points to four pillars that seem to play a critical role in enabling organizations to pursue joint social and financial goals over time – specifically, how organizations set goals, structure activities, select members and socialize those members. She then reflects on the interplay between these pillars and the organizational culture of hybrids. As for Svenningsen-Berthélem, Boxenbaum and Ravasi, their study of a French energy corporation inhabited both by a science and a market logic investigates how employees respond to hybrid organizing (Svenningsen-Berthélem, Boxenbaum & Ravasi, this issue). Employees' responses are shaped by three types of capital – scientific, social and cultural – that are accumulated through their professional training, the type of organizational position they occupy, and the length and variety of their work experience in a hybrid organizational setting. Hence, this article contributes to the fruitful tradition of research at the crossroad between Bourdieusian thinking and institutional theory.

In their empirical investigation of the genesis and propagation of community-based palliative care in Kerala, Vijai and Monin leverage institutional theory to improve our understanding of the macrofoundations of social innovations (Vijai & Monin, this issue). To do so, they build on the nascent conversation about poisedness and propagation, namely the receptivity of a context to certain organizational inventions, and the readiness of the context to be reconfigured by the cascading effects of these inventions (Vijay & Monin, this issue: 1330). The authors underline the importance of political poisedness, which rests on the actions of a large array of organizations and individuals, to explain the emergence of social innovations. In his long essay, Friedland extends his efforts to bring stronger ontological grounds to the institutional logics perspective (Friedland, this issue). To that end, he proposes a personal reading of both Schatzki's practice theory and Heidegger's phenomenology, and reflects on the practice of being and living in a world composed of a plurality of institutional logics and goods.

The remaining articles in this special issue relate to methodological and epistemological considerations. Maire and Liarte emphasize the visual turn in organization studies (Maire & Liarte this issue) and call for more visual or multimodal analyses (Höllerer, Daudigeos & Jancsary, 2017). They first review the main concepts linked to visuals, such as semiotic analysis and visual rhetoric, and a diverse set of theoretical frameworks for considering visuals in management studies. They ultimately list important methodological considerations for those interested in this endeavour.

Gümüsay, Höllerer and Meyer point to another neglected dimension of organizational life: scent. Their article makes the claim that scent is an important semiotic mode that conveys cultural meaning and hence participates in the social construction of reality. The authors introduce three novel concepts – institutional scent repertoire, organizational scent identity and scent literacy – that may fertilize different streams of organisation studies.

The two final essays share the same critical view about how we do research in management and organization studies nowadays, and offer interesting insights about the making of theories. Cunliffe denounces a narrowing and dehumanization of scholarship under the multiple constraints of the "publish or perish" imperative. She brings to the fore the notion of "wayfaring", which refers to "the embodied experience of walking/moving along paths in our research landscapes paying attention—where attend means to wait and be open to what may unfold" (Cunliffe, this issue: 1433). Bernard Forgues, the founder of M@n@gement concludes this special issue with his intriguing "Kant in pyjamas" (Forgues, this issue). Building on Gerald Davis and Pierre Bourdieu, Forgues reflects on the evolution of organizations and organization studies over the past 20 years. Despite tremendous changes, he contends that social sciences that matter always rely on an intricate relationship between abstract theorization and engagement with empirics. Standing on the shoulders of giants while being deeply engaged with data remains a relevant compass for management research.

CONCLUSION

M@n@gement continues to be visible and known for its unique positioning. We hope our mandate as chief editors – reflecting our keen engagement in the open access movement and our research community – will help the journal gain even more influence. Although we can be proud of what has been already achieved, we wander through conferences and seminars to remind our colleagues about why they should send us their best work and read what we publish. In the meantime, we aim at strengthening bridges between the research appearing in this journal and the practitioners, managers and executives who can benefit from it.

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