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Exploring the Intersection of Managerial Innovation and Social Innovation: Embracing Convergence and Divergence for a Harmonious Society

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This article explores the distinctions and commonalities between social innovation and managerial innovation within the context of contemporary organizational practices.

Methodology/approach: Through an analysis of the current literature in both fields of study, this paper presents a comprehensive framework encompassing theoretical approaches, conceptual dimensions, and identified literature gaps.

Findings: Significant disparities exist between management and social innovation concerning their theoretical and conceptual foundations. While both share some commonalities, such as the focus on social relations, their generation, adoption and diffusion processes.

Research limitations/implications: By integrating other types of innovation into the theoretical framework, we can conduct empirically oriented research and broaden our exploration of various innovation types.

Originality: This paper makes a valuable contribution to enhancing our comprehension of innovations. It achieves this by jointly analyzing innovations, such as managerial and social innovation. Few researchers have undertaken such a comprehensive examination of these types of innovations together.

Keywords: Innovation, Managerial innovation, Social innovation, Convergence; Divergence; Adequacy.

INTRODUCTION

In a context of rapid change and growing societal challenges, innovation has become a key driving force in the shaping of a harmonious future, both within companies and in society as a whole. In addressing these challenges, two forms of innovation - managerial and social - have emerged as particularly important. While they share common goals, they differ in approach and purpose.

Managerial innovation focuses on reinventing management and organizational practices to optimize the performance and efficiency of companies. It involves adopting new ways of working, using cutting-edge technologies, and fostering creativity and collaboration within teams. The ultimate goal is to increase the competitiveness and profitability of organizations in a constantly evolving global marketplace.

On the other hand, social innovation is rooted in the needs and aspirations of society. It aims to address social, environmental and economic problems by creating innovative and inclusive solutions. Unlike business innovation, which focuses primarily on business performance, social innovation seeks to improve the quality of life for individuals, strengthen community ties, and promote social justice.

Despite their seemingly divergent goals, both forms of innovation share a critical commonality: a positive impact on society and the environment. Managerial innovation can facilitate the implementation of more responsible and sustainable practices within companies, while social innovation can inspire new management approaches based on collaboration, transparency, and consideration of stakeholders.

Thus, by exploring the similarities and differences between business innovation and social innovation, we will better understand how to leverage both to shape a sustainable and cohesive future. By encouraging companies to adopt a holistic vision, that considers both their economic performance and their social impact, and to contribute to the emergence of a more balanced society in which economic prosperity is inextricably linked to the collective well-being of all.

At first glance, managerial innovation and social innovation both involve changes in social systems, including societies and organizations. Focusing on innovation within social systems, Are there commonalities in the theoretical and conceptual foundations of business and social innovation?

By reviewing the state of the literature in both fields, this theoretical article contributes to a better understanding of innovations that go beyond technology and include social aspects at their core.

Essentially, this research follows a progressive path consisting of two main points. First, we will present a theoretical and conceptual framework, delving into research on theoretical models and investigating the interactions between our two concepts, which will allow us to uncover the similarities of managerial innovation and social innovation.

1. MANAGERIAL INNOVATION, A POLYSEMOUS AND PROTEAN CONCEPT

Kimberly (1981) was the first to use the term managerial innovation, driven by a desire to raise awareness of other forms of innovation besides technological innovation (Le Roy & al., 2013). More recently, Autissier & al. (2018) presented the notion of managerial innovation through a set of managerial concepts that now describe what these authors called "new ways of working."

There are several definitions of managerial innovation in the literature. The different perspectives offered by these definitions are interesting given the nascent state of the field of managerial innovation research, especially as these definitions complement rather than contradict each other (Volberda & al., 2013).

According to Kimberly (1981), managers make decisions, so managerial innovation affects the decision-making process. Hamel (2006) takes a similar approach to conceptualizing managerial innovation. His understanding of managerial innovation is that it is a change in the way managers do what they do.

Thus, managerial innovation has an impact on a wide range of activities. In Hamel's (2006) view, unlike Kimberly's (1981), the activities potentially affected by managerial innovation are not limited to the decision-making process.

To summarize, managerial innovation is any program, product, or technique that represents a significant departure from the state of the art in management at the time it first appeared and that affects the nature, relationship, quality, or quantity of information that is available in the decision making process (Kimberly, 1981).

As defined by Hamel (2006), managerial innovation is a significant departure from traditional management principles, processes, and practices, or a departure from current organizational forms that significantly changes the way managerial work is done.

Birkinshaw & al. (2008) provide a definition of managerial innovation that is authoritative in the literature following the emergence of the Innovation Management Lab in the mid-2000s: Managerial innovation is the invention and implementation of a new management practice, process, structure, or technique relative to what is known, with the goal of better achieving the organization's goals.

The definitions of Kimberly (1981), de Hamel (2006), and Birkinshaw & al. (2008) conceptualize managerial innovation as novelty relative to the state of the art, also known as conceptual novelty (Adam-Ledunois & Damart, 2017).

Innovation is then the result of a creative process that combines existing and new ideas and breaks with existing management practices, processes, structures, or techniques. The level of analysis is therefore broad (Vaccaro & al., 2012). In fact, innovation is a relative concept that depends on the level of analysis at which we place ourselves (Damanpour & Wischnevsky, 2006).

Daft (1978) and Damanpour & Wischnevsky (2006) show that even if a practice is not invented within a firm, it can be considered an innovation at the firm level because it changes the way things are done.

in the same vein, Daft (1978) and Damanpour & Wischnevsky (2006) show that even if a practice is not an invention within a firm, it can be considered an innovation at the firm level because it changes the habitual way of doing things.

Consequently, any practice or idea can be a managerial innovation at the organizational level if it is perceived as new by the actors in that organization (Le Roy & al., 2013).

Furthermore, like other types of innovation, managerial innovation may also be differentiated according to its degree of novelty. Mol & Birkinshaw (2014) and Mattelin-Pierrard (2019) suggest distinguishing between incremental management innovations (improvement and refinement of existing practices) and radical management innovations (radical departure from existing practices).

Within managerial innovations, we need to distinguish between organizational innovations and management innovations (Hoareau, 2021). The former focus on changes in organizational structure or business form. They are based on new ways of managing that can sometimes lead to better decisions.

Since the 1960s, the literature has used a variety of terms to refer to managerial innovation: organizational innovation, administrative innovation, and, since the mid-2000s, managerial innovation (Damanpour, 2014; Damanpour & Aravind, 2012).

These different terms have a number of attributes in common, beyond simply designating a form of innovation of a non-technological nature: the introduction of new managerial practices and processes, new organizational forms within an organization (Dubouloz, 2013).

While these concepts have much in common, they are not completely identical (Birkinshaw & al., 2008; Volberda & al., 2013). Birkinshaw & al. (2008), who first introduced the term managerial innovation in their seminal article, justify the choice of this term by pointing out that managerial innovation refers to a narrower set of innovations in organizational structure and human resource policies (as conceptualized by Evans (1966)) and does not include, for example, innovations in management operations.

According to Hamel (2006), managerial innovation concerns all managerial activities, which is a much broader field. On the other hand, according to the authors, the main drawback of the term organizational innovation is that it is too easily confused with innovation within organizations, i.e. innovation of any kind (product, service, process innovation, etc.) that occurs within organizations. The term managerial innovation now seems to be the most widely used in the literature (Damanpour, 2014).

However, these terms are closely related and are often used interchangeably in the literature. Therefore, this literature review will also consider articles that use the terms organizational innovation or administrative innovation.

2. SOCIAL INNOVATION: EVOLUTION AND MAIN APPROACHES

Social innovation is a concept that is increasingly attracting the attention of several actors: academics, politicians, international organizations..., without its definition being unanimously agreed among these actors; it is often confused with other concepts close to it, such as the social and solidarity economy (SSE), social entrepreneurship, third sector, social enterprise... (Montgomery, 2016). According to Richez-Battesti & al. (2012), it can mean social intervention, societal (including other considerations such as environmental issues) or organizational (new organizational forms such as cooperatives...).

Social innovation is characterized by its focus on society, putting users at the center of the process, and on the general interest, in that it enables actors to drive creative change that generates a degree of social justice. It fills the gaps and minimizes the risks of technological innovation, since the latter tends to materialize all aspects of social life, with the risk of social disintegration, the abuse of nature and of money because man is not a commodity like any other, because he is not a robot, but a thinking being capable of deliberation (Prades, 2015).

It is one of the essential tools in the fight against poverty and vulnerability, and, of course, provides an innovative response to other social and environmental issues, particularly those relating to vital needs such as (food, health, employment, education ... etc.).

Likewise, according to Levesque (2012) among the reasons for accelerating the expansion of such an idea are the successive crises our globe has undergone:

- The international financial crisis (1929-1930)
- The crisis of values: challenge to providentialism and fordism (1960's)
- The oil crisis (mid-1970's)
- The crisis of social and employment crisis (1980's and 1990's)
- The new international financial crisis (2008-2009), produced a range of social harms that public services could no longer fully respond to due to a struggling welfare state (Avise, 2012).

In the same way, we owe the revival of the foundations of social innovation to Quebec authors who have enriched its field of definition. Hence the need to refer to CRISES (Center for Research on Social Innovations of the University of Quebec in Montreal), which considers it to be a new social, organizational or institutional arrangement, or new product or service with an explicit social purpose. Resulting, voluntarily or involuntarily, from an action initiated by an individual or a group of individuals to respond to an aspiration, satisfy a need, provide a solution to a problem, or take advantage of an opportunity for action in order to modify social relations, transform a framework for action, or propose new cultural orientations.

Thus, all authors who have studied social innovation agree that it serves to solve social problems through creative proposals and actions, to bring about lasting social change and, of course, to reduce the impact of social crises that can have a detrimental effect on the socio-economic development of countries, especially developing countries, where social failures weigh heavily.

Amblard & al. (1996) consider social innovation as one of the elements that articulate the entrepreneurial logic of the SSE. Thus, according to Besançon & Chochoy (2015), the SSE is seen as a matrix of social innovation composed of highly innovative actors. The social innovation is therefore linked to the SSE. It also assumes very strong relationships with three other concepts, namely: social entrepreneurship, the social entrepreneur and the social enterprise (Defourny & Nyssens, 2011).

At this level, it is important to point out the main approaches to social innovation, which Richez-Battesti & al. (2012) describe in the form of three broad concepts:

The organizational approach: To promote economic and social growth in a world increasingly condemned to financial crises, social innovation can be presented as a tool for organizational and public policy renewal.

In other words, according to Besançon & al. (2013), the organizational approach aims to evolve or complement the shortcomings of the social policies adopted by public organizations through resistance to budget cuts, consideration of private sector experiences, or satisfaction of user needs.

Similarly, Besançon & al. (2013) and Richez-Battesti & al. (2012) continue in the same vein, announcing that the organizational level of social innovation can be seen as a tool for modernizing public policy. Here, social innovation is seen as a response, implemented by a social entrepreneur, to the inefficiency of public action.

The institutionalist approach: The institutional approach, developed by the CRISE social innovation research center, goes beyond the classic definition of social innovation, which covers the resolution of social problems and the use of novelty.

In this sense, a broader definition of social innovation is proposed as an intervention initiated by social actors to respond to an aspiration, meet a need, provide a solution or exploit an opportunity for action in order to modify social relations, transform a framework for action or propose new cultural orientations (Dauphin, 2012). Thus, this definition focuses on satisfying social needs by creating or seizing opportunities and on a dynamic of social transformation based on cooperation.

The social entrepreneurship approach: according to Harrisson (2012), this approach is closer to an individual approach of compassion and altruism towards the most disadvantaged and vulnerable social groups in society. It focuses on social entrepreneurship, the social entrepreneur and the social enterprise. According to Draperi (2011), social entrepreneurship defines a movement of thought that originated in the business world of the United States, which attempts to bring together social entrepreneurs in many countries.

As for the social entrepreneur Dees & Anderson (2006), consider social entrepreneurs as people who reform or revolutionize traditional production systems to create social value by moving resources to places that offer a higher return for society.

In addition, Defourny & Nyssens (2006) defined social enterprise as an organization with an explicit goal of community service, initiated by a group of citizens and in which the material interest of investors is subject to limits.

3. MATCHING MANAGERIAL AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

These theoretical contributions and approaches to managerial and social innovation present aspects of convergence and divergence between them. The similarities may arise from the notion that numerous social innovations require a significant level of managerial innovation. (Lopes & al., 2017).

Nevertheless, the emphasis on outcomes that go beyond the initial objectives theoretically expands the concept of social innovation. It includes not only managerial facets, but also factors related to the aspirations and outcomes of the innovation. Undoubtedly, it can be discussed that social innovation requires a certain degree of managerial innovation, but not all managerial innovations, even if they affect social relations, have the characteristics of social innovation.

On the one hand, theoretical perspectives on managerial innovation allow the study of both internal and external aspects (Lopes et al., 2017). On the other hand, social innovations can only be analyzed by taking the beneficiaries into account. (Frazão et al., 2015). As a result, it becomes methodologically unfeasible to limit the analysis of social innovations only to internal aspects.

Institutional analysis is explored to understand both concepts, taking into account their different characteristics. However, this exploration is carried out with some reservations, but institutional analysis proves to be valuable in elucidating the diffusion processes of managerial innovation and innovation within organizational structures (Damanpour, 2014).

In terms of social innovation, such analyses help interpret change by taking into account both internal and external resources, as well as political and power dynamics within a given territory (Lopes et al., 2017). According to Porter and Kramer (2011), these analyses focus on elements that go beyond mere value creation, prioritizing the creation of shared value that facilitates and generates a social practice that emerges from the integration between organizations and their environment.

Moreover, research on social innovation occurs primarily within organizations where collaborative practices are established (Klein, 2013). In terms of key conceptual dimensions, managerial innovations focus on changes in organizational structures, management processes, activities, and practices. In contrast, social innovations include dimensions related to the involvement of different actors, scalability effects, power relations, resources, learning from social practice, the nature of the innovation, and its economic, political, social, and environmental impacts (Lopes et al., 2017).

In terms of objectives, authors of management innovation focus on improving organizational performance, while theorists of social innovation address social problems and public well-being by solving unresolved social challenges. Social innovation can be profit-driven in its conception, involving the generation of social value, the improvement of quality of life and the promotion of sustainable development.

Crucially, in addition to improving overall organizational performance, managerial innovation can also address the goals of other stakeholders, such as improving customer and employee satisfaction, refining the quality of management processes, and fostering better inter-organizational relationships.

In terms of innovation emergence processes, theorists in both fields consider creation and diffusion as key phases (Lopes et al., 2017). In the context of managerial innovation, the creation phase involves the participation of both internal and external actors and includes stages such as motivation, invention, and implementation (Klein, 2013).

On the other hand, the adoption of a managerial innovation, whether it has already been created or is currently being disseminated, involves stages such as decision making, planning, adaptation, and implementation. In this scenario, both internal and external actors play a role, but their involvement differs from that in the creation stage (Buckland & Murillo, 2014).

In contrast, the social innovation process ranges from conception and development to consolidation and expansion, with the goal of achieving systemic change. It involves a wide range of internal and external stakeholders and is deeply rooted in local and territorial contexts.

Partnerships between a wide range of actors, whether inside or outside an organization, are implicit in the concepts of both managerial and social innovation. In the former, actors may take on hybrid roles at different times, such as consultants or managers. In the latter case, partnerships are essential and require coordinated efforts between nonprofits, government agencies, civil society organizations, families, and leaders to achieve meaningful systemic change (Klein, 2013).

As their outcomes and consequences show, both types of innovation are extremely complex, and attempts to innovate can fail in both cases. In particular, managerial innovation may involve concrete measures of performance, but also more intangible, implicit, and difficult-to-quantify outcomes, such as those that affect employees and other stakeholders (Volberda & al., 2013).

The outcomes of social innovation depend on its degree of assimilation and institutionalization and manifest themselves in a variety of ways, such as novel organizational structures and social interactions, improved products/services, updated laws, rules, procedures, models, policies and programs. These outcomes include advances in well-being, sustainability, social and political inclusion, and improved quality of life, especially for vulnerable and marginalized communities. In addition, additional waves of innovation are also mentioned as potential outcomes (Hart et al., 2015).

Research on both types of innovation is characterized by methodological pluralism, involving different levels of analysis and abstraction. In-depth research has examined the processes of generation, diffusion, and adoption of these innovations. Studies on managerial and social innovations have also employed methods such as longitudinal studies and in-depth case studies (Pitsis & al., 2013).

However, researchers on managerial innovation show interest in large-scale international comparative surveys, relying on standardized measures such as those in the Oslo Manual (OECD, 2005), despite the limitations highlighted by Damanpour (2014). With regard to social innovation, researchers focus on the context of its development, including the factors that facilitate its implementation and the impact of successful experiments (Parente & al., 2014).

Lastly, in terms of gaps in the literature, there are many opportunities to advance research on both managerial and social innovation (Lopes et al., 2017). Volberda et al. (2013) and Damanpour (2014) highlight the importance of integrating theories, clarifying concepts, exploring the interactions between managerial and technological innovation, and gaining a deeper understanding of generative processes.

Future research on social innovation should focus on assessing environmental conditions that promote sustainability and diffusion of innovations, implementing policies that encourage novel approaches to align different interests and actors, analyzing the most appropriate methods to optimize resources, and understanding the characteristics of social innovation that facilitate its diffusion (Oliveira and Breda-Vázquez, 2012).

In addition, Pue et al. (2016) emphasize that sponsors of socially creative strategies, in their quest to maximize social impact, need more accurate information about how social innovation unfolds and the barriers that can obstruct the success of socially creative strategies.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the adequacy between managerial innovation and social innovation has allowed us to shed light on the numerous convergences and divergences that exist between these two approaches. While each has its own purpose and specificities, it is undeniable that they can mutually enrich each other to create a more powerful and sustainable positive impact.

The convergences between managerial innovation and social innovation primarily lie in their common goal of improving society and the environment. Managerial innovation can be a crucial lever in encouraging companies to adopt more responsible and sustainable practices by integrating social and environmental considerations into their business models. Similarly, social innovation can inspire new managerial approaches based on inclusion, transparency, and stakeholder consideration, thereby fostering a more collaborative and engaged corporate culture.

On the other hand, the divergences between these two forms of innovation stem from their focus perspectives. Managerial innovation primarily focuses on optimizing business performance and competitiveness, while social innovation emphasizes resolving social problems and promoting equity. However, these differences can be transformed into opportunities to unite the strengths of economic and social actors, creating synergies that benefit all levels.

By proposing an integrated framework to analyze both managerial and social innovation, we have demonstrated that their complementarity can offer significant advantages. By encouraging a holistic approach, where companies commit to both their economic objectives and social responsibilities, we can build a more balanced and resilient future.

In conclusion, the adequacy between managerial innovation and social innovation is essential for creating a sustainable and inclusive society. Companies have a crucial role to play by integrating these two approaches into their organizational DNA while actively collaborating with social change actors. This will require bold thinking and concerted action to overcome the challenges inherent in divergences and seize the opportunities offered by convergences.

In this perspective, future research should deepen our understanding of the mechanisms of synergy between managerial and social innovation, identifying best practices and potential obstacles to overcome. By collectively mobilizing our intellectual and creative resources, we can build an ecosystem where companies thrive while actively contributing to addressing the social and environmental challenges of our time, offering a promising perspective for a more united and equitable future.

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