

Introduction to the Thematic Feature

International Management Research and Africa: Contents, Tensions, and Cross-Fertilizations

Introduction au dossier thématique

La recherche en management international et l'Afrique : contenus, tensions et fertilisations croisées

Introducción al dossier temático

Investigación de gestión internacional y África: contenidos, tensiones y fertilizaciones cruzadas

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article montre comment la recherche en commerce/management international (CI/MI) peut être articulée à une compréhension approfondie de l'Afrique pour servir à la fois le développement des connaissances universitaires et les priorités africaines. Il rappelle de manière critique les caractéristiques centrales du CI/MI en tant que domaine de recherche, présente comment l'Afrique est étudiée dans ce domaine, présente le « management africain » comme une réponse à certaines des principales critiques de la recherche actuelle en CI/MI, décrit quelques croisements entre le CI/MI et le management africain, et discute de la contribution de publications sur l'Afrique dans la revue *Management international* à certains des fondements de la fertilisation croisée proposée entre CI/MI et management africain.

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Introducción al dossier temático

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ABSTRACT

This article shows how international business/management (IB/IM) research can be articulated to an in-depth understanding of Africa to serve both academic knowledge development and African priorities. It critically recalls the central characteristics of IB/IM as a field of research, shows how Africa is studied in this field, suggests "African management" as one response to some of the major criticisms of current research in IB/IM, outlines some crossovers between IB/IM and African management, and discusses the contribution of Africa-focused publications in the journal *International Management* to some of the foundations of the proposed cross-fertilization between IB/IM and African management.

Keywords: International Business, International Management, African Management, Contextualization, Theorization

Résumé

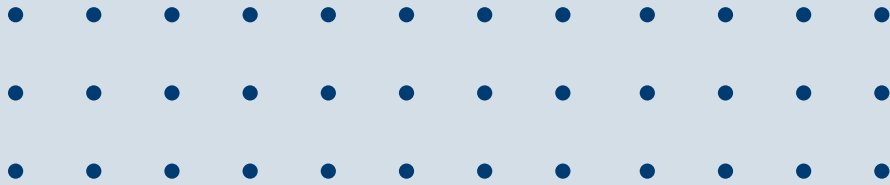
Cet article montre comment la recherche en commerce/management international (CI/MI) peut être articulée à une compréhension approfondie de l'Afrique pour servir à la fois le développement des connaissances universitaires et les priorités africaines. Il rappelle de manière critique les caractéristiques centrales du CI/MI en tant que domaine de recherche, présente comment l'Afrique est étudiée dans ce domaine, présente le « management africain » comme une réponse à certaines des principales critiques de la recherche actuelle en CI/MI, décrit quelques croisements entre le CI/MI et le management africain, et discute de la contribution de publications sur l'Afrique dans la revue *Management international* à certains des fondements de la fertilisation croisée proposée entre CI/MI et management africain.

Mots-Clefs : Commerce international, Management international, Management africain, Contextualisation, Théorisation

Resumen

Este artículo muestra cómo la investigación sobre negocios/gestión internacional (IB/IM) se puede articular para lograr una comprensión profunda de África para servir tanto al desarrollo del conocimiento académico como a las prioridades africanas. Recuerda críticamente las características centrales de IB/IM como campo de investigación, presenta cómo se estudia África en este campo, presenta la 'gestión africana' como una respuesta a algunas de las principales críticas de la investigación actual en IB/IM, describe algunos cruces entre IB/IM y la gestión africana, y analiza la contribución de las publicaciones centradas en África en la revista *International Management* a algunos de los cimientos de la fertilización cruzada propuesta entre IB/IM y la gestión africana.

Palabras Clave: Negocios Internacionales, Gestión Internacional, Gestión Africana, Contextualización, Teorización



There is an interesting shift in the perception of Africa: the pessimistic perception to which the continent has always been subjected seems to be gradually giving way to a form of optimism. Of course, there are great changes on the African continent. Since 2020, Nigeria has taken the lead in the top 5 of the most economically advanced African countries, thus causing South Africa to lose its position as the continent's leading economic power. There was the creation, in 2018, of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The trade was announced to be commencing as of 1 January 2021. But the world as a whole is just changing. There is thus, in parallel with the African dynamics, a revitalization of the world economy with new actors from the so-called emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—BRICS). In addition to these trends in Africa and the rest of the world, international academia praises the merits of the role that the African context would play in the production of knowledge (e.g., George *et al.*, 2016; Mol *et al.* 2017; Walsh, 2015). Some academics raise the question of management knowledge in the service of Africa's development (e.g., Zoogah & Nkomo, 2013; Zoogah *et al.* 2015). This second academic path is not, however, the most widespread.

These dynamics are extraordinary grounds for academic fields such as International Management (IM) and/or International Business (IB). Reading between the lines, these ongoing dynamics seem to be driven more by the search for business opportunities and the production of academic knowledge (e.g., Chironga *et al.* 2011), and to a lesser extent by the development of Africa itself. Indeed, the intentional or forced opening of Africa to the rest of the world goes back centuries and yet Africa is still lagging behind in terms of improving the living conditions of its people, i.e. Africa has not yet been developed (e.g., Conable, 1990). The special issue that is the subject of this article has therefore been thought of as a conversation helping to examine the following question: what can research in IB/IM bring to Africa and what can managerial practices in Africa bring to IB/IM research. The guest editors of the special issue propose in this article to develop some essential ideas for that conversation.

The rest of this article is organized as follows. First, we critically recall the central characteristics of IB/IM¹ as a field of research. Second, we present how

1. Throughout the paper we will be using IB/IM to reflect our idea that it might be misleading to think of International Management as an isolated field.

Africa is studied in this field. Third, we suggest African management as one response to some of the criticisms of current research in IB/IM. Fourth, we show some crossover between IB/IM and African management. Fifth, we show how Africa-focused publications in the journal *Management International/International Management/Gestión Internacional* relate to some of the foundations of the cross-fertilization that we suggest. Finally, we conclude.

What is International Management (IM)?

International Management (IM), as a scholarly discipline, is unique in that it is both cross-functional, therefore multidisciplinary, and transnational. Such a distinctive characteristic poses recurring challenges to delineating its intellectual field and, consequently, its contribution to knowledge on organizations. Prasad *et al.* (2008) refer to the evolution of IM as “pell-mell.” However, since its advent as a field of research in the late 1950s, there have been considerable efforts to understand its scope and paradigmatic approaches. Much more than any other field of organization and management research, IM has gone through a serious identity question, i.e. its distinctiveness with regard to organization and management research in general. The title of Werner & Brouthers's (2002) article in *JIBS* is symptomatic of this definitional question: “How international is management?” In the same vein, the article by Contractor (2000) is an example of “what IM is” and “what IM is not.” For instance, he indicates that there is an overlap between IM and International Business (IB). Yet, in Wright & Ricks (1994), IM and IB seem to be interchangeable. Moreover, in Werner (2002), IB falls under the IM research category named “Global Business Environment.” Contractor (2000) argues that IM is interested in the differences in degree and kind of management practices of multi-country organizations, as well as understanding the context of host countries, whereas IB is more focused on understanding the interactions between organizations and supranational organizations. This makes MNCs, ultimate multi-country organizations, a privileged field of study in the IM literature (Roth & Kostova, 2003). We do believe that there is an International Business (IB) within which International Management (IM) takes place. To be clear, it is fair to consider that IB and IM themselves operate amidst International Relations (IR) marked, among other considerations, by colonial dominance (e.g. Gitelman, 1971; Glaister *et al.* 2020; Liou *et al.* 2017, Wanasika *et al.*, 2011).

Another aspect of this debate over IB/IM's identity is reflected in other long-standing discussions on its scope, i.e. its breadth and depth (e.g., Lu, 2003; Werner, 2002; Werner & Brouthers, 2002; Wright & Ricks, 1994). Acedos & Casillas (2005) identified a mix of paradigms/theories/themes that are central to the IB/IM literature: International Alliances and International Joint Ventures (IJVs), Eclectic Theory, Transaction Cost Theory, Sequential Approach to the Process of Internationalization, Organizational Models for Multinational Companies, Resources and Capabilities Approach. Amidst the "pell-mell" evolution of IM, Martínez & Toyne (2000) provide a much clearer picture that the IB/IM field falls under three major culture-bound paradigms: Extension, Cross-border, and Emerging interaction paradigms. The first is aimed at testing, at the firm level, business theories in other environments (i.e., cultural, economic, legal, political). This first paradigm addresses questions as to whether variations in management practices are dependent on host countries' social-economic settings. The second focuses on managing organizations across, at least, two countries. Its driven question deals more with whether variations in management practices stem from multi-location business operations. The third paradigm examines the outcome of managing activities across borders. Especially, it is intended to examine how experiences in multi-country business operations affect management practices in home and host organizations and even countries.

It is also important to note criticisms that marked out IB/IM literature throughout its evolution (Jack *et al.*, 2008; Prasad *et al.*, 2008). IB/IM literature suffers from criticisms commonly addressed to functionalist paradigms: the universalism of organizational practices. Jack *et al.* (2008, p. 881) point to this indicating that the extant IM literature serves the interests of the "one-third world" leaving the "two-third world" unheard and unserved. For Prasad *et al.* (2008), IB/IM is less inclusive for overemphasizing IB/IM's market aspects at the expense of its inherently, yet forgotten, non-market features. These criticisms prompted Prasad *et al.* (2008, p. 627) to propose a new definition of IB/IM: "International management entails managing the market factors—land, labor, capital, and organization, or their contemporary equivalents, in tandem with non-market elements—culture, conflict, or cooperation." While these criticisms tend to advocate a "paradigm shift," other critical examinations of the IB/IM field, not reflexive enough though, stress the expansion of research directions reinforcing, paradoxically, its paradigms of origin (e.g., Griffith *et al.*, 2008; Lu, 2003; Werner, 2002; Wright & Ricks, 1994).

While new research directions tend to incorporate IB/IM's non-market dimensions, they continue to overlook power relations embedded in IB/IM (Jack *et al.*, 2008).

Overall, there are some clear tensions over the underlying "meta-theoretical assumptions" of the IB/IM field (Jack *et al.*, 2008). There is a quest for the integration of its "pell-mell" orientations, which Acedos & Casillas (2005) indicate could be satisfied by considering the development of theories with a broader scope while thinking of relaxing the field's restrictive cultural premises of origin. But for Jack *et al.* (2008), meta-theoretically knowing where the field has been should be a precondition to gauge where to head. Buckley (2002) even speaks of the need to identify a new big question for the discipline. Kirkman & Kenny (2005) also express the selective internationalization of IB/IM in terms of diversity and data origins, advocating the pursuit of a multidisciplinary, multicultural orientation of the field. While over the last decade, Africa, one of the most intellectually unvoiced and unheard social settings in international scholarship arenas, has attracted scholarly attention, we propose, in the next section, to discuss how fundamental definitional and situational questioning of the IB/IM field is dealt with as the field is being opened to African organizations.

Africa in IM Scholarship: from Resource-Seeking to Market-Seeking Rationales

There has been a change in Africa-IB/IM relations marked by four movements: the traditional presence of Western organizations, the recent breakthrough of organizations from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS), the intra-continental development of African organizations in Africa, and the development of African organizations in rest of the world. The first movement is the traditional North-South IM/IB relations. The second and third movements reflect what can be termed South-South relations, and we refer to the last as South-North relations. Nevertheless, IB research on Africa is still dominated by historical North-South relations. Studies in these three relations perpetuate the three cultural-bound paradigms (Martínez & Toyne, 2000). However, as research on South-South and North-South relations are joining the initial North-South research conversations, the lack of epistemic reflexivity of the field is being voiced and heard (Jack *et al.*, 2008). Research in these relations fits well Acedos & Casillas's (2005) two-dimensional framework made of the level of analysis (i.e., related to

inter-organizational relations versus individual organization behavior) and theoretical approach (i.e., management orientation versus economic orientation).

First, while there is a renewed interest from African's traditional partners (Musau, 2017), the role of foreign MNCs in Africa has been questioned since the late 1970s (Abiaka, 1972; Gitelman, 1971; Van Dam, 1978). Since its early days, the IM field was essentially centered on the study of Western expansionism. For instance, until very recently US investors were reluctant about the internationalization of US's MNCs into Africa (Owhoso *et al.*, 2002). This contradicts the institutionalist advocacy that the opening of African markets would level up Africa's development (e.g., Bird *et al.*, 2004; Ibru, 1997). This resonates with the "Why not invest in Africa" by Abiaka (1972) as there is still a dominant developed-country perspective on risks associated with North-South relations (Dince & Umoh, 1981; Simon, 1984). For instance, Han *et al.* (2018) indicate that political risk does exist from the perspective of developing-country MNCs investing both in developed and developing countries.

Co-construction of non-market responses to institutional voids regarding host country risks are evidenced as alternatives in North-South relations (Amankwah-Amoah *et al.*, 2022). While foreign organizations, like other local actors, are part of the root causes of the institutional flaws, they can likewise be part of the solutions (e.g., Adomako *et al.*, 2021; Barnard & Mamabolo, 2022; Birhanu *et al.*, 2016; Stevens & Newenham-Kahindi, (2021)). Stevens & Newenham-Kahindi, (2021) find that MNCs have room to address flaws like corruption if they intend to do so. Corruption can even be alleviated via business process digitalization (Adomako *et al.*, 2021). This might explain why some authors are advocating that an actor-centered approach appears to be central in conducting African business (Fon *et al.*, 2021; Hearn *et al.*, 2018, 2017; Wöcke & Moodley, 2015). This is also valid in South-South relations.

The focus on actors reveals contextual specificities. First, the African context like any emerging country context is socio-historically marked by a dual economic system made of a modern sector and a traditional one (Boso *et al.*, 2018; Wijnholds, 1981). This dualism is not exclusively economic; it is also social, thus institutional, well captured in Areneke & Kimani's (2019) study of governance arrangement in cross-listed MNCs on the Nigeria Stock Exchange. On top of this, colonial ties have been proven to maintain a complex role in IB/IM relations in Africa (Glaister

et al., 2020; Minkov & Hofstede, 2014). These historical ties are determining factors in South-North relations, too (Liou & Rao-Nicholson, 2017). Second, ethnic diversity/identity is a key social feature in Africa (Thomas & Bendixen, 2000). This resonates with Luiz's (2015) call for a recognition of the complexity of this societal feature formation and its dynamics within the fabric of modern Africa. Third, putting actors at the center of the field helps bring to the front some social issues occurring as Africa-IB/IM relations evolve, such as MNCs' corporate social irresponsibility (CSiR) (e.g., Hawn, 2021; Hoffmann *et al.*, 2020; Karnani, 2007; Persson *et al.* 2014). It also stresses the importance of the overlooked actors in IB/IM-Africa relations such as customers and media. Even knowledge transfer from foreign MNCs appears to be contentious in some instances while being portrayed as an essential benefit of globalization (Fortanier & Van Wijk, 2010).

As North-South relations are progressing, inter-organizational relations are forged through the imposition of management practices/organizational forms, such as corporate governance (Munisi *et al.*, 2014) or privatization (Drum, 1993; Ramamurti, 1992) engineered outside Africa. The results of these are mixed. For instance, corporate governance arrangements in IJV with local government elites improves country-level control and political stability (Hearn, 2015). However, at the firm level, Boateng & Glaister (2002) evidence the outperformance of private company host partners in West Africa IJVs over public company host partners. African IJVs' performance can even be dependent on the partners' origin (Africa versus outside Africa) and corporate-level strategy (cost leadership versus differentiation (Acquaah, 2009). Here also, entry modes are adjusted to the host country's state of institutions. Meyer *et al.* (2009) show that, in emerging markets, in instances of weak institutional settings, IJVs are used for resource fetching strategies while acquisitions are preferred for the same resource-seeking strategies in stronger institutional contexts.

Second, new inter-organization relations are marked by South-South relations driven by the advent of emerging-countries MNCs mainly from BRICS. South-South relations, as to now mostly led by Africa-China relations (e.g., Jackson, 2012), are three-way: BRICS to Africa, Africa to BRICS, and intra-intracontinental MNCs development. There are some attempts to use non-market interactions to sustain market relations (Abodohou & Su, 2020; Mazé & Chailan, 2021; Parente *et al.*, 2019). While non-market endeavors are not exclusive to

South-South relations, they are recurrently emphasized in related studies. Some instances evidence actors' willingness to co-build those non-market relations (Abodohouï & Su, 2020; Fon *et al.*, 2021; Mazé & Chailan, 2021; Parente *et al.*, 2019). Non-market interactions can be perceived as ways to go around or manage host country institutional hurdles.

Non-market and market relations are understood as a whole by MNCs in South-South relations. Accordingly, knowledge transfer occurs within a "relevance perspective" as opposed to a "superiority perspective" (Rui *et al.*, 2016). Some evidence of cultural proximity among BRICS is pointed out as an enabling factor for South-South relations in IB/IM (Perry, 1997; Xing *et al.*, 2016). This contradicts the "economic distance" thesis developed by Demirbag *et al.* (2011).

It's probably too early to assess the impact of South-South relations, but all seem to indicate that Southern MNCs tend to develop a more synergistic approach in their IB/IM as documented by Hanssens & Johansson (1991) in the case of Japanese MNCs' development outside Japan, including in Africa. However, Pearson *et al.* (2010) show that not every BRICS represents significant development opportunities for Africa MNCs' internationalization.

Finally, there is a stream of research addressing the internationalization of African MNCs out of Africa, marking unprecedented South-North relations in the IB/IM literature (Han *et al.*, 2018; Kalasin *et al.*, 2014; Liou *et al.* 2017).

As mentioned in the introductory lines of this section, the outweigh of IB/IM's initial research realm (i.e, North-South relations), alongside its new research streams accompanied with the exclusive reference to IM's foundational theories, contribute to the maintenance of the dominance of the three cultural-bound paradigms. These authors evidence this contrary to the conventional wisdom in advanced economies, that unrelated diversification depresses profitability in emerging economies. We notice the prevalence of IB/IM traditional paradigms/theories which raises some concerns. Africa's place/role in IB/IM is quite paradoxical: once courted for its natural resources and now for both its resources and markets but systematically portrayed negatively (Ostrander, 1969). Bartlett (1991) opens up an interesting discussion on social injustice and economic ideology, which remains a valid contribution to the necessary discussion of the ultimate goal of organizations in Africa. Acknowledging the failure of the systemic peripheralization of Africa occurring through Africa-donor relations shaping the

continent's institutional settings, Conable (1990) indicates that self-reliance should be promoted instead of continuously creating dependency, through among others, Africa-IB/IM relations. By the same token, Kamoche (2011) provides a critical examination of the nature of business relations and management practices relating to the small minority formed by foreign firms that engage with Africa. He also points out the epistemological problem associated with the adoption of "foreign" practices and calls for an evolutionary paradigm shift (Kamoche, 1997). Findings indicating that charismatic leaders frequently invoke African indigenous cultural values and means to overcome problems instituted by colonial dominance is empirical evidence of the relevance of such criticism (Wanasika *et al.*, 2011). This shows how timely bringing in what Kamoche (2008) calls the "home-grown management philosophies" is. African management emerges in response to such a void and subsequent calls to fill it. In the next section, we present this perspective. It will be an interesting guide to discuss to what extent African management might help address criticisms pointed out in the IM/IB-Africa literature.

Research on Management and Organizations in Africa: From Invisibility to African Management Modeling

The above-pointed criticisms are not exclusive to the IB/IM-Africa literature. They are part of a general reaction to the dominance of knowledge production with Western precepts, serving Western interests (e.g., Boyacigiller & Adler, 1991). Those criticisms are the backbone of the Global North/Global South dialectic (Alcadipani *et al.*, 2012). It is through this intellectual stream that African management gradually emerged. Nevertheless, strongly dominated in its theoretical standpoints built on postcolonial approaches, African management, although having certain usability (Seny Kan *et al.*, 2015, Seny Kan & Apitsa, 2014), was somehow self-trapped in both academic and organizational operational impasses (Nkomo, 2011). Because management knowledge is key to development (Zoogah & Nkomo, 2013; Zoogah *et al.* 2015), this momentum has come a long way to now providing forms of modeling African management (Amankwah-Amoah, 2018; Amankwah-Amoah *et al.* 2022; Hernandez & Kamdem, 2007; Holtbrügge, 2013; Inyang, 2008; Jackson, 2013; Jackson *et al.*, 2008; Kamoche, 1997, Mutabazi, 2006; Zoogah, 2008, Zoogah *et al.*, 2015).

While the African context is still being instrumentally viewed as an opportunity for deepening existing dominant theories (Barnard *et al.*, 2017; George, 2015), African management marks a way of balancing western theory testing type of research with ones bringing African perspectives in the theorizing crafting, i.e. the “generation of context-specific theories and empirical studies of management and organizations in Africa” (Nkomo, 2018, p. 274). The aim is to respond to the need to theorize the African context in theory-building endeavors (Acquaah *et al.*, 2013; George *et al.*, 2016; Kolk & Rivera-Santos, 2018; Mol *et al.*, 2017; Nkomo, 2017). It is also a matter of a quest for “authenticity” (Alcadipani *et al.*, 2012, p.135), which has its core tenets at the intersection of crossvergence and African renaissance (e.g., Jackson, 2011, 2013; Seny Kan *et al.*, 2015). Different models with distinctive purposes emerge from the African management literature. We identify three underlying orientations among the variety of existing African management modeling.

We termed the first as theory-driven African management modeling. In this line of research, Zoogah *et al.* (2015)’s model is based on modeling the African context from the point of view of its institutional dualism, the essential African contextual distinctiveness also pointed out in the IB/IM—Africa literature. Method-driven is the second African management model we identified (Amankwah-Amoah, 2018; Zoogah, 2008; Zoogah & Nkomo, 2013). Key to Amankwah-Amoah’s (2018) argument is the self-confidence required to conduct African management research can be achieved through the conjunction of three complementary investigation directions: mobilizing indigenous concepts, crafting novel research, and applying Western and Eastern theories. Zoogah’s (2008) and Zoogah & Nkomo’s (2013) approaches stresses two ways of theorizing the African context in African management. One consists of refining theories from other contexts to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes of the new context (i.e. the African context). The other one consists in developing theories that are unique to the African context. Of course, such developments represent challenges (e.g. Holtbrügge, 2003; Inyang, 2008; Jackson, 2013), hence Amankwah-Amoah’s (2018) idea of building self-confidence for researchers embracing these knowledge creation routes.

The last African management modeling we identify is what we term as the “power influence-driven model” stressing global dependencies Africa is

experiencing (Jackson, 2011, 2012; 2015, Jackson *et al.*, 2008; Jackson & Aycan, 2006). Central to this last modeling pattern is that African organizational effectiveness is determined by two major sources of influence: intercontinental and intra-countries influences. Further to his modeling, Jackson (2013) devises a framework where African local knowledge is articulated in African management research in specific regard to IB/IM. The power influence-driven modeling of African management also provides methods for African management research (Jackson, 2013). This last modeling is consistent with multi-actor political networking in African management (e.g., Adegbite *et al.*, 2013; Amankwah-Amoah *et al.*, 2022). Other African management models emphasize the relational characteristics of African management, yet overlook its inherent power dynamics (Hernandez, 2007; Hernandez & Kamdem, 2007; Mutabazi, 2006, 2008).

One benefit, among others, of these models, is that they pinpoint some unique features of the African context. Zoogah *et al.* (2015) operationalized the African context as made of nominal formal and informal dimensions. IB/IM activities can be the interconnectivity channels of these two dimensions of the African context (e.g., Barnard, 2019). Amankwah-Amoah (2018) helps us understand that African management research can be streamlined into indigenous and comparative strands where studies inform intra- and inter-African contexts. Contextual characteristics pinpointed in Zoogah (2008) are collectivistic culture, chieftaincy-driven governance systems, traditional religion, and event-driven modes of interaction defining social systems. He also points to individual-level, cognitive, affective, and behavioral features, which contribute to the uniqueness of the African context. Theory-, method-, and power influence-driven modeling of African management has a complementary mapping of the uniqueness of the African context. Yet the power influence-driven modeling has a more comprehensive scope than the first two. It defines the African context as the coexistence and combination of inter-continental context, cross-national context, and national context (Jackson *et al.*, 2008; Jackson, 2011). The inter-continental context is characterized as the bedrock of a certain developed-developing paradigm conditioning certain power relations. The cross-national context is operationalized as the place of regional cooperations, historically discouraged by colonial powers. The national context is conceived as made of inter-ethnic interactions within a multiple identity setting.

This section showed that the African management literature could help address some of the criticisms raised in the IB/IM-Africa literature. The next section discusses mutual insights these two lines of research may consider.

African Management and IB/IM: A Cross-Fertilization

Africa, like other non-western contexts, is instrumental in sustaining the IB/IM field i.e. testing theories (e.g., Busch *et al.*, 2021; George *et al.*, 2016; Stevens & Newenham-Kahindi, 2021). While the advancement of IB/IM theories is important for knowledge progress, IB/IM-Africa relations should also serve Africa. We believe that a much more societal level overarching purpose should drive IB/IM-Africa relations: Africa's development. Indeed, advocates for economies' connectedness through various channels, including IB/IM, promise reduction in the development gap. Yet early at the end of the '70s, Agodo (1978) clearly indicates, for instance, that US MNCs do not invest in Africa unless they perceive a high rate of return, the size of the domestic market, the presence of raw materials, sufficiently developed infrastructure, political stability, a favorable investment climate, and good prospects for the growth of private enterprise in the host country. Unfortunately, this attitude, which contradicts the development reduction gap perspective, is implicit in the behavior of the multinational organizations operating within Africa-IB/IM relations. On the one side, Africa is in need of effective management for its development; on the other side, IB/IM scholarship has to address its lack of internationalization while looking for new research contexts to refine its stock of knowledge. There is therefore a formidable cross-fertilization ground as different objectives can be achieved in an unprecedented collective effort.

A starting point for achieving a cross-fertilization between IB/IM-Africa literature and African management literature is to build an understanding of the interdependence between knowledge development objectives on the one hand and development objectives on the other. We can adopt a development view that includes the conjunction of structural change (economic development), human development, environment and sustainability development, and improved governance (governance development) (e.g., Seny Kan *et al.*, 2021). Such a multifaceted development definition has the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a robust reference point, and therefore should be acceptable. Interestingly, the

African Union's (AU) "*Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*"² continental development strategic plan and African Development Bank (AfDB) "*Ten Year Strategy 2013–2022*"³ are aligned with the UN's SDGs. An interesting cross-fertilization-driven question could be: based on extant IB/IM—Africa and African management literature, how can future research serve Africa's development priorities while advancing IB/IM knowledge.

African management has an educational component, which could be another cross-fertilization opportunity (e.g., Jones, 1989; Nkomo, 2015, 2018; Safavi, 1981; Thomas *et al.*, 2016; 2017). Indeed, there is a direct link between knowledge production (research) and knowledge dissemination (education). This is valid for the field of IB/IM. Nkomo (2018) has one of the most recent developments on the topic inspired, in part, by the AU's Agenda 2063. She devises a tripartite conception of African management education whose center hinges on African local context but which is also informed by "continental and global realities" (Nkomo, 2018, p. 269). Such an inter-contextual African management education is aligned with the three African management models and could inform the IB/IM curriculum for Africa.

In this section, we showed that research and education offer opportunities for cross-fertilization between Africa-IB/IM and African management. In the next section, we discuss how Africa-focused research in *Management International/International Management/Gestión Internacional* could contribute to the reflections we have developed so far.

Contributions of Africa-Focused Research in *Mi*

A recent special issue in *Management international/International Management/Gestión internacional* (2020, 24(3)) (Cheriet *et al.*, 2020) contributes to several aspects of the "inter-organizational relations" domain of Africa-IB/IM literature through internationalization, including South-South relations or mother-daughter relations. We can also relate to Claeys's (2019) reflection on the characteristics and attributes of African management. His development on the necessarily hybrid nature of management theory in Africa is consistent with crossvergence approaches

2. Source: <https://au.int/agenda2063/sdgs> (Accessed 06/04/2022)

3. Source: <https://www.afdb.org/en/high5s> (Accessed 06/04/2022)

to modeling African management (e.g., Jackson, 2011, 2013). Other published Africa-focused studies in *International Management* usefully complement the reflection that we make in this article. Referring back to the Acedos & Casillas's (2005) analysis of IB/IM literature, we identify studies informing Individual organizational behaviors/Inter-organizational relationships (Abodohoui *et al.*, 2018, 2020; Apitsa, 2018; Onomo *et al.*, 2019; Pichault & Nizet, 2013), and others using theory testing (Anassé, 2013; Ben Mahmoud-Jouini *et al.*, 2020; Diaw *et al.*, 2020; Kefi & Sarr, 2014).

In the first group of research, the literature review of Abodohoui *et al.* (2018) not only contributes to the study of China-Africa relations (i.e., the South-South line of research in the IB/IM-Africa literature) but also considers the IB/IM-Africa relations in terms of the negative and/or positive impact of IM in the host country. In the same research line, the comparison of managerial practices between China and Africa helps to better understand the context of two major actors in South-South relations (Abodohoui *et al.*, 2020). We believe that such evaluative type of studies are in need in the IB/IM-Africa literature, especially if our intellectual endeavors have to balance academic-centric objectives and transformation of Africans' development ideal. Apitsa (2018) stresses the attitude expatriates should have towards the African social context. She shows in the context of a French MNC operating in Cameroon how the adherence of expatriates to local values is a source of synergy promoting managerial efficiency. Moreover, Apista (2018) indicates that in appreciation of organization effectiveness, the role of value cannot be discarded. Onomo *et al.* (2019) show that foreign ownership in Cameroonian companies negatively affects asset profitability and positively investment. Nevertheless, when foreign ownership grants access to control of the local company, it maintains a positive relationship with the profitability of assets and a negative one with investment. Pichault & Nizet (2013) contribute to South-North literature by developing a relational approach to intercultural management that highlights the institutional work of the managers of a Beninese company exporting to Europe in the management of power relations in their environment. These few examples of studies highlight local contextual elements at work. Of course, when one tones down the dominant functionalist view of the organization, managing people cannot be value-free.

The second group of research is theory-testing oriented even though it contributes, in a lesser manner, to shed light on local contextual features. Anassé

(2013) proposes a segmentation strategy in the Ivorian context that could be a decision-making tool for the African manager while resolving some contradiction in market segmentation theory. Mahmoud-Jouini *et al.* (2020) show the pertinence of deepening the tradition of research on North-South relations by refining the literature on the role of subsidiaries in MNCs' innovation. They introduce an intermediate model opposing glocal and local models. Diaw *et al.* (2020) provide an economical-managerial (i.e. industrial economics combined with marketing literature on the "bottom of the pyramid") account for industrialization development in Africa. The authors highlight the importance of understanding the local market in industrialization strategies in Africa. Kefi & Sarr (2014) do a comparative test of the theory of moral development in Europe (Belgium, France, Switzerland) and Africa (Algeria, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire Gabon, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia).

These two groups of selected Africa-focused studies show the possibilities of aiming for a deep understanding of the local African context while engaging in academic conversations with an international scope. Here lies the heart of the cross-fertilization between the IB/IM literature and the African Management research that we advocate in this paper. This cross-fertilization responds to the inadequacies of current theories to capture social and organizational dimensions of IB/IM while putting African management research, which addresses these inadequacies, at the service of Africa's development. We are not there yet but research prospects for such an approach are endless. The continental development agenda planned by the AU and AfDB could be a good source of future research inspiration in this area.

Conclusion

The objective of this article was to reflect on how IB/IM research in the African context can help improve scientific knowledge in IB/IM and better understand the recurring question of the development of the African continent. Our examination of the IB/IM field shows that the lack of inclusion and consideration of power relations in the study of Africa-IB/IM relations constitutes important criticisms for researchers sensitive to putting management research, in general, to the service of Africa's development. We show that the current African management literature is at such a point of modeling that it could favor a research stream

which, while helping to address IB/IM criticisms, contributes to the development of Africa. This perspective would correspond to Buckley's (2002) call for the need to identify a new big question for IB/IM. We hope that this article contributes to a broader reflection on putting our research at the service of development in the less advanced parts of the World.

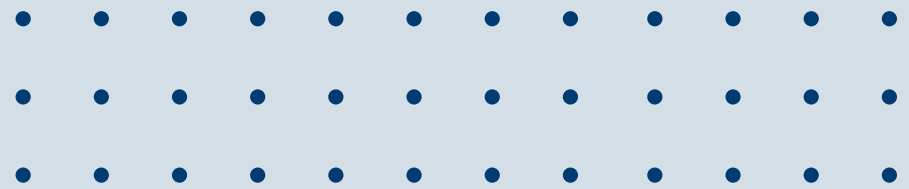
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