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Hybridization in Work Integration Social Enterprises: a multilevel model

Sub-theme 27, "Hybridity and Beyond: Exploring Alternative Organizational Approaches for Addressing Social Issues"
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working paper

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I. Introduction

This article is based on a research which reveals a diversity of practices of response to the challenges of hybridity in Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs). Most previous work on hybridization has been concerned with the organisational level (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2013), the sectoral level (Thornton, 2002, 2004), the field level (Dunn & Jones, 2010; Nigam & Ocasio, 2010), or the individual level (McPherson and Sauder, 2013; Smets et al., 2015) but multi-scale analysis has never been proposed. This particular and hitherto not studied approach brings a new light on hybridization phenomenon that can enrich two theoretical corpora: that of the Institutional Logics Approach (ILA) and that of social enterprise.

In recent years, a number of authors have examined the phenomenon of hybridization in social and solidarity economy (SSE), which is drawn into a spiral of globalisation and liberalisation of exchanges, often characterised by a context in which the organisations come into competition with those of the conventional economy, with no account being taken of their "social added value" (Draperi, 2007). In this context, hybridization of different institutional logics is an ever-growing stake and response to isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Previous research has investigated how SSE organizations design their practices (Pache &

Santos, 2013), processes (Besharov, 2014), and arrangements (Battilana, Sengul, Pache, & Model, 2015) to recombine social impact and profitability. But these works have been focused on the organisational level and don't explain how it interacts with the individual and regional scales. Yet, WISEs often develop strong links with public actors and can be considered as a part of employment public policies. They grasp together the founding actors, regional institutional actors and open the way to new territorial regulation mechanisms (Gianfaldoni and Morand, 2015)

More precisely, we are interested in WISEs as a specific type of social enterprise that is representative of a new mode of hybridization. This renewal of organizing explicitly ambitions to combine social and commercial objectives, and are often viewed by public stakeholders as potential service providers, particularly in a period of cutbacks in social spending (Gianfaldoni and Morand, 2015). Thus, three different logics seem to animate the sector.

Indeed, under French legislation (loi n° 2008–1249, 1 December 2008), the work integration sector enables "unemployed people facing serious social and/or occupational problems to obtain employment contracts in order to ease their integration into the labour market". WISEs hire long-term unemployed people in order to (re) integrate them in society. These individuals, whom we'll call "beneficiaries", experience specific social and professional difficulties which make it impossible for them to access the regular jobs. They face multiple obstacles to work, including low qualifications, low levels of self-confidence, and a lack of professional skills. As they work on the production line in WISEs, they are expected to acquire soft skills such as attendance, workplace socialization, and discipline as well as more job-specific skills. This (re)integration objective is WISEs'main purpose. However, we have to keep in mind that (re)integration is apprehended through economic production and implies productive results: the beneficiaries produce goods or services in low-skilled industries such as construction, catering, gardening, or recycling, which need to be sold on commercial market. This clearly induce a market or commercial logic. WISEs also have the particularity to be strongly supported by the State, which contributes in France from 30% to 70% of their financial resources (according to their for profit status in the first case and non profit status in the second case), revealing the importance of a public logic. WISEs need to obtain an accreditation from the Ministry of Labour, in order to be entitled to a public subsidy intended to offset the opportunity cost of employing less-productive people who require extra supervision and training (Battilana et al., 2015). These plural specificities make WISEs even

more interesting as an object for grasping the diversity, coexistence or conflict of plural institutional logics.

We propose to shed a particular light on the phenomenon of hybridization by a multi-level perspective. Our aim is to explain this phenomenon, not only at the organisational level but also at the individual and regional level, in order to determine whether Work Integration sector can generate a new institutional field, constructing local multi stakeholders arrangements between some potentially contradictory institutional logics.

II. Hybridization strategies and WISEs: a literature review

Defining hybridity and hybridization strategies

The Institutional Logics Approach (ILA) emerged in the 1970s as an offshoot of institutional theory. It seeks to analyse the interrelationships among institutions, individuals and organisations in social systems. It makes it possible to understand how individual and organisational actors are influenced by their situation in multiple social locations in an interinstitutional system (Thornton & al., 2012, p.2). Institutional logics are defined by the founders of this approach as sets of "material practices and symbolic constructions" (Friedland & Alford 1991, p. 248) which guide actors' behaviour in given field. Thornton and Ocasio (1999, p. 804) later defined institutional logics as "the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organise time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality." In this definition, they assign three essential characteristics to institutional logics, reflecting a conception of institutions that is at once structural, normative and symbolic. These logics are organised "around cultural systems and symbol systems within specific contexts, illustrating how culture is anchored in a set of elemental building blocks, not just (…) 'floating out there in thin air'" (Thornton 2004, p. 42). They frame individuals' behaviour; and organisational actors can also change and shape them (Thornton, 2004).

In contrast to the previous theoretical developments, which sought to understand the effects of institutional logics at the societal level on individuals and organisations (Friedland & Alford, 1991), the renewed approach of Thornton and Ocasio opens the way to a host of studies which grasp the phenomenon of hybridization at levels of analysis as varied as markets, industries, inter- organisational networks or organisations. It thus creates a bridge between macro-structural and micro- process perspectives.

Organizations use specific strategies to manage tensions between logics, namely to maintain hybridity (Oliver, 1991). Institutional scholars have described four main types of such strategies so far: compromising, decoupling, selective coupling and more recently structured flexibility. ***Compromising*** (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) happens when organizations make concessions to partially conform to the demands of proponents of incompatible logics. For instance, Pache & Santos (2013) showed that micro-finance organizations compromise between development and economic logics. The ***decoupling*** of practices from an organization's goals refers to the processes by which this organization separates its normative or prescriptive structures from its operational structures (Bromley & Powell, 2014 ; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). ***Selective coupling*** (Battilana & Dorado, 2010, Binder, 2007, Greenwood & al., 2011, Reay et Hinings, 2009*)* consists in reconciling logics by selecting practices from each one to maintain the membership of all members. Unlike compromise, the practices are not adopted in an altered form but carefully selected from the extended repertoire of behaviours prescribed by each logic. Finally the last kind of practices for hybridization i.e. ***structured flexibility*** (Smith & Besharov,2019) interaction of stable organizational features and adaptive enactment processes

Hybridity in WISEs

This framework is particularly fertile to analyse social enterprises. Indeed, these organizations pursue a social mission while they also engage in commercial activities through sales of products and/or services. The last decades have been marked by an ever-growing interest in understanding how they react to the diversity, the coexistence or the conflict between these social and commercial logics (see, e.g., Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Galaskiewicz & Barringer, 2012; Hoffman, Gullo, & Haigh, 2012; Pache & Santos, 2013). Thus, they are often considered as "hybrid" organizations, combining aspects of multiple organizational forms (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Haveman & Rao, 2006; Padgett & Powell, 2012).

We choose to study WISEs in particular because they crystallize the stakes linked to the hybridity of social enterprises. While their main objective is to help the long-term unemployed people to transition back into the labor market, they have to hire them to produce goods or services, which are then sold on the commercial market. Therefore, they have to handle the tensions occurred by the pursuing of multiple goals, linked to distinct and potentially competing demands of their beneficiaries (unemployed people they hire) and their customers (enterprises on the commercial market). They both have to reach financial viability

and efficiency, and to get disadvantaged workers employable. Most of the research on this question operates at the organizational level. Researchers mainly aim to explain how WISEs' managers "hydridize" inside the structures the social and commercial logics to perpetuate their organisation (see, e.g., Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Galaskiewicz & Barringer, 2012; Hoffman, Gullo, &Haigh, 2012; Pache & Santos, 2013).

However, our model of analysis leads us to examine how WISEs "hybridize" logics on a multi-level scale. More precisely, we investigate three different scales of analysis: the individual scale of managers and beneficiaries and how they adopt the logics, the organizational scale of WISEs, and the meso scale of territorial interorganisational relationships between WISEs and their main stakeholders: namely the prescriptors, the funders and the clients. Multi-level analysis of WISEs' "hybridization" process is a hitherto little studied question. Meanwhile, we argue that hybridization operates not only at the organizational level of WISEs, but also at the individual level and at the territorial level.

More precisely, our work is motivated by the following research question: ***How do WISEs combine different logics, potentially contradictory, in a multi-scale perspective?***

III. Methods of analysis

To answer the research question, we build on a qualitative approach with a case study of Corsican WISEs. Corsica, small island (270. 000 inhabitants) in the south of France, provides an interesting case of analysis by giving us the opportunity to construct an exhaustive sample of WISEs. Indeed, there are only 34 WISEs in the island, among which we interviewed 20. Before presenting the data collection and analysis, we briefly present the French context regarding WISEs.

French WISEs

In France, the work integration field is now officially recognized as part of the social and solidarity economy (as mentioned in the 2014 Law on SSE). Work integration initiatives, recognized and subsidized by public authorities are mainly the following (Petrella & Richez-Battesti, 2016) : Integration Enterprises (IE - *entreprises d'insertion*), Temporary Work Integration Enterprises (TWIE - *entreprises de travail temporaire d'insertion)* which are both **for-profit** organizations, and two types of **non-profit** organizations which are : Intermediate Associations whose aim is to play the intermediary at the local level between work supply and demand (IAs - *associations intermédiaires*) and Centres for Adaptation to Working Life (CAWLs -*ateliers chantiers d'insertion*) that provide training and work to people excluded from the labor market.

To operate, WISEs need to get an accreditation from the Ministry of Labor. This accreditation entitles them to a public subsidy intended to offset the opportunity cost of employing less-productive people who require extra supervision and training. This is a fixed amount per beneficiary. The public accreditation requires to hire beneficiaries assessed by Pole Emploi (the national agency for employment) as "experiencing specific social and professional difficulties which make it impossible for them to access the regular job market" (DGEFP, 2003: 7).

WISEs require a partnership between two key actors: a socio-occupational mentor and a technical supervisor. The socio-occupational mentor has the function of facilitating the re-socialization and the re-enrolment of employees being integrated in work collectives by trying to eliminate the 'social barriers' specific to each individual. The technical supervisor rather addresses their occupational inadequacies and focuses on the productive part.

Data collection

Our first data source is a series of 15 semi-structured interviews conducted with three categories of actors: (1) public actors in charge of work integration policies, (2) managers of WISEs, (3) technical supervisors or operators in charge of socioprofessional integration. The interviews, lasting between 42 minutes and 136 minutes, were recorded and transcribed in their entirety. They were concerned with the respondents' perceptions of WISEs'activities, their social mission, their productive activity and the place of the organization in the local governance system. These data were complemented with participant observation. One of the author spoke at a regional meeting of WISEs organized by the French employment agency, which constituted a precious resource to analyse the discourses of the actors and interactions between the organizations. She also participated to a "technical committee" organized by the agency with the Direccte (labor department of the prefecture) and the local public funders, which dealt with the accreditation[1] process of the WISEs. The other author has a large research experience of longitudinal approach of WISE's in south of France.

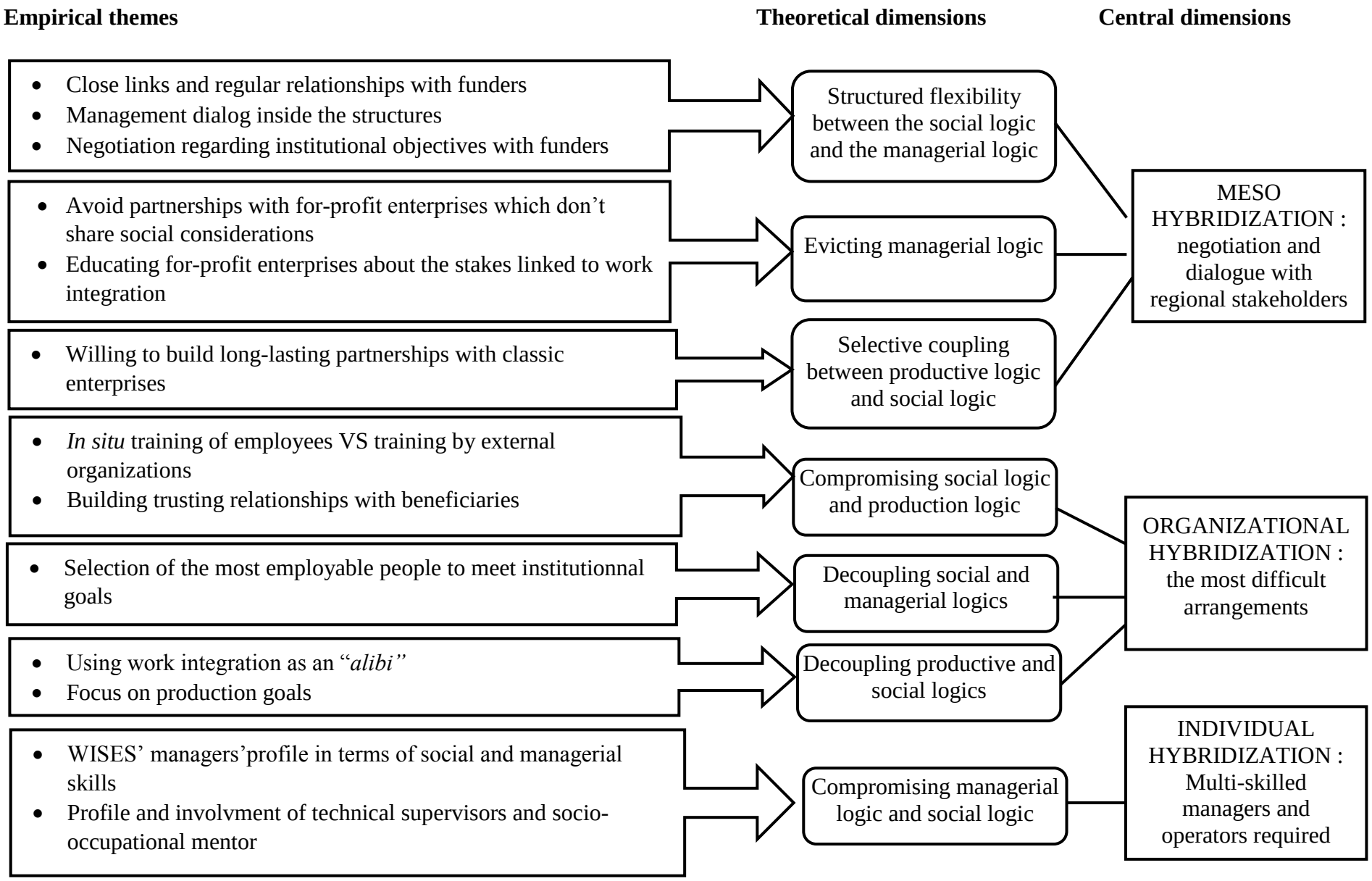
Data analysis

The method of analysis devised by D. A. Gioia (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & al., 1994; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Nag, Corley & Gioia, 2007; Gioia & al., 2010) was used to identify the aggregated themes and dimensions of our empirical material. This method was chosen so as to be able to put forward a robust model composed of "overarching dimensions" that seek to articulate the various themes of the material with a view to understanding the research question. Analysis of the data was organised in several stages. The accounts given by the

[1] In France, an accreditation entitles WISEs to a public subsidy intended to offset the opportunity cost of employing less-productive people who require extra supervision and training.

interviewees were first compared with data from internal and external sources – legislative documents, activity reports – to draw up the practices of hybridization. In a second stage, the data were re-examined with the aid of the NVivo software package (version 7) developed by QSR to group first-order concepts – verbatim in the transcripts – as **empirical themes** through a process of open coding (Van Maanen, 1979). This relied on an inductive reasoning that aimed to group the similarities and differences in the material from the various sources.

In accordance with the methodology developed by Gioia, the third stage consisted in assembling the thirteen second-order concepts into seven **theoretical dimensions** and applying an abductive approach. This process, based on an axial coding technique, was not linear but consisted rather in a to-and-fro between theory and empirical data to identify the major types of hybridization practices. The aggregated theoretical dimensions did not appear spontaneously but we progressively realized that the different types of practices operated on different scales. It thus became clear that the process of hybridization of logics happened on three scales (the **three central dimensions**):


Empirical themes
Theoretical dimensions
Central dimensions
Close links and regular relationships with funders
Management dialog inside the structures
Negotiation regarding institutional objectives with funders
Avoid partnerships with for-profit enterprises which don't share social considerations
Educating for-profit enterprises about the stakes linked to work integration
Willing to build long-lasting partnerships with classic enterprises
In situ training of employees VS training by external organizations
Building trusting relationships with beneficiaries
Selection of the most employable people to meet institutionnal goals
Using work integration as an "alibi"
Focus on production goals
WISES' managers'profile in terms of social and managerial skills
Profile and involvment of technical supervisors and socio-occupational mentor
Structured flexibility between the social logic and the managerial logic
Evicting managerial logic
Selective coupling between productive logic and social logic
Compromising social logic and production logic
Decoupling social and managerial logics
Decoupling productive and social logics
Compromising managerial logic and social logic
MESO HYBRIDIZATION : negotiation and dialogue with regional stakeholders
ORGANIZATIONAL HYBRIDIZATION : the most difficult arrangements
INDIVIDUAL HYBRIDIZATION : Multi-skilled managers and operators required

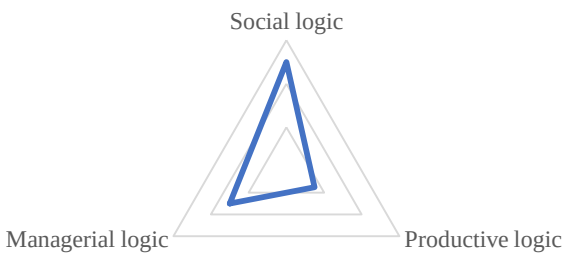
IV. The french case of Corsican WISEs

We propose two main empirical contributions in this paper. The first one is the characterization of three institutional logics in the field of WISEs. While the literature often focuses on commercial/productive and social logics, we highlight the importance of a managerial logic, reflect of the overgrowing complexity of economic models of WISEs, especially in terms of relationships with public funders. In this perspective, our work meets the analysis of Semenowicz (2018), who also identifies these three logics. However, he builds on the French "economics of conventions" school which doesn't allow to contextualize these logics -they are associated to the civic-market-industrial conventions). Neither does his work propose a multi scale approach of the practices of hybridization of these logics, when it is precisely our objective. From these three logics, we propose a typology of Corsican WISEs according to the importance of each one in the organizations. The second main empirical contribution is a multi-level model of hybridization of these logics. While collecting the datas, we realized that practices of hybrization occurred not only at the organizational level but also at the individual level and at the regional level. Furthermore, building on our typology, we can associate the different types of WISEs to specific practices. We summarize here these empirical results.

Characterization of Corsican WISEs' institutional logics and typology

First of all, it is important to specify that our typology bypasses the legal forms of Corsican WISEs. No matter these legal forms, we aim to determine the pregnancy level of each logic by analysing the practices and representations of the actors.

WISE 1 work insertion as motor



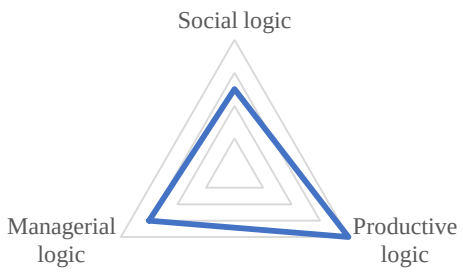
This first type of WISE is constituted by organizations which prioritize the social logic. For these actors, economic activities are a means to transition back people into the labor market, in order to help them to participate in society. In Corsica, these organizations are all non-profit and operate mainly on traditional work integration markets: i.e. municipal upkeep of green areas and BTP. The actors interviewed insist on the importance to keep in mind that these markets are nothing more than a means to integrate their beneficiaries. One of these WISE 1's managers says:

"*Recycling is very fashionable these years so we're very very solicitated. But my main job is work integration. I have to be careful that it does not become just a support to set up some activities. My job is work integration; I don't want to manage a waste platform, it's not my goal*."

Thus, the productive logic is only mobilised to serve the social logic. However, the growing complexity of public funding induces a specific importance for the managerial logic. Indeed, even if they aren't focused on productivity, these organizations have to deal with more and more institutional constraints in order to survive. Competition is induced by public budget constraints (cutbacks and ex-post evaluation) together with the introduction of market forces such as call for projects as an alternative to the more traditional method of subsidizing providers. Thus, these WISEs' leaders have to develop extremely specific managerial skills, which can sometimes depart them from the social logic, despite its obvious importance in the project and its history.

Another WISE 1's director tells us: "*the superposition of instruments requires exceptional financial engineering. That's why my first professional experience as a financial manager in a private bank really helps me ! Because yes, the European Social Fund pays well but it has to be earned! really ! For example I have a control process over 2017 and it is very very long"*

WISE 2 work integration as social enterprise's support

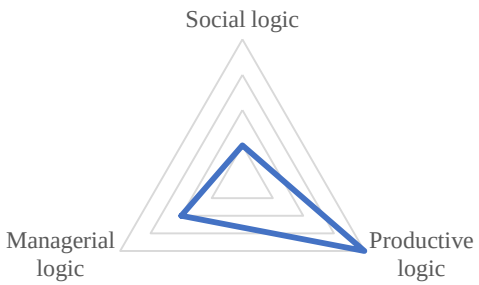


Most organizations of this second type we identified are non-profit. However, unlike in WISE 1, WISE 2's managers assume that work integration is a means to develop their social enterprise. Some of these WISEs' managers even consider work integration as a constraint. They chose this status because of the opportunity of public funding.

"*WISE was not my first choice at all. I wanted to create a "solidarity garage" and I had no other financial window so I accepted the constraint*" declares one of the WISEs 2's managers interviewees. The use of the term "constraint" illustrates well how the social logic is instrumentalized in order to serve the productive logic.

Despite their non-profit legal status of IA or CAWL, these WISEs priory the productive logic and their managers try to mobilize existing funding devices without necessarily sharing the structuring values of work integration sector. These WISEs declare themselves as social entreprises because they pursue a social mission but our study shows that they are closer to social business perspective than SSE philosophy.

WISE 3 work integration as classic activities' support



In this third type of WISE, work integration is the support of classic economic activities. Consequently, these organizations have a for-profit legal form and work integration in often a component of their activities.

Finally, one important result at this stage is the importance of the managerial logic in the three types of WISEs. While this logic has often been neglected in the literature of hybrid social enterprises, it seems to be essential in our case study, particularly because of the increasing complexity of the legal and institutional framework of French WISEs and because of the NMP culture.

A multi-level model of hybridization

Our coding work leads us to analyse the hybridization strategies and practices through three different scales: individual, organizational and territorial.

- Hybridization at the individual level: multi-skilled managers and operators required

Our results confirm the necessity for WISES' managers and operators to be skilled in both management and social aspects in order to manage the tensions from the social, managerial and productive logics. It is the case for most of WISES 1 et 2, but not for WISEs 3, which managers don't have any social skills and all come from for profit enterprises.

- Hybridization at the organizational level: the most difficult arrangements

The organizational scale is the one which crystallises the most important difficulties in terms of hybridization. **Decoupling** appears to be the main strategy used by WISEs to hybridize the logics. Our analysis also enlights in this sense the selection bias: while the founding premise of work integration sector is that "no one is unemployable", organizations select the individuals they believe are closest to employment. Indeed, the situation differs from upper to lower Corsica. In the first case, WISEs have the control over recruitment while in the second case beneficiaries first have to be filtered by Pole Emploi (the national agency for employment). For example, one of WISEs 2 managers tells us: "*We in Upper Corsica have control over recruitment and we intend to keep this control, so keep that in mind! Why? I'm going to tell you things that may shock you, but that's okay. I have a very very very particular approach of work integration, there are people who today whatever their situation, their*

status, who are not ready to be accompanied towards employment okay? And you can't force people." We are here tipically in a decoupling situation since in appearance, work integration discourse is shared, but in the representations and practices, the core postulates are denied.

- Hybridization at the meso level: negotiation and dialogue with regional stakeholders

Our analysis reveals that the meso level is the one which leads to the "best" compromises between the social, the managerial and the productive logics. In other words, it is on this scale that we observed the most efficient practices to hybridize the three logics. All these practices are linked to negociation and dialog with local stakeholders, mainly with public funders. Many practices observed fall within the scope of **structured flexibility** since they reflect adaptative processes. If compromises between logics are easier at this scale, it is mainly because Corsican economy is an economy of proximity that de-anonymizes relationships. Firstly, relationships with public actors:

"*the advantage of the committee is that he [Didier, a public funder] sees who we recruit, so afterwards when he tells me : "you haven't made your objectives on such and such aspect", I say "well Didier look who you sent me I'm not the Tinkerbell fairy." Proximity helps to explain things."*

Secondly, relationships with for profit enterprises, i.e. the clients, are also de-anonymised in a context of proximity. WISEs have an in-depth knowledge of local economic actors and are able to avoid partnerships with for-profit enterprises which don't share their social considerations. The following quote illustrates this phenomenon with a WISE 1 manager's comment about the use of "induction period" device, proposed in France to send beneficiaries on an internship in a company while maintaining their salary:

"in fact they [clients, using the "induction period" device] just had a big mess on a building site, they took 3 trainees they made them work hard because they dangled before them the possibility of getting them a job but at the end they were exploited and they had nothing! But it happens once not twice! That's where the advantage of being in a region like Corsica, everyone knows each other and everything is known so you get caught once not twice !"

In this perspective, our results confirm and enrich Battilana & al (2015) 's work about the importance of local "spaces of negotiation" in order to build compromises. In the corsican context, we propose the concept of "local arenas".

V. Discussion and conclusion

While the studies mentioned in our literature review have considerably enriched our understanding of hybridization in SSE field, they remain silent about the specific and concrete practices and strategies that influence this phenomenon on different scales. We address this gap by identifying and providing the first (to our knowledge) qualitative evidence for different types of practices on each level of analysis. Second, our study uncovers spaces of negotiation as important mechanisms for hybridization of different institutional logics. We call these spaces "arenas" and show how they take place in the regional level and how they condition hybridization at the organizational scale.

Unlike Battilana et al's work (2015), we haven't focused on for-profit WISEs but also included non-profit WISEs. Even if these organizations seemed at first glance less concerned by the commercial logic and thus by hybridization, they still have to sell their production and above all to fit to institutional criteria for funding. Thus, our results contribute to put the importance of legal status into perspective. Indeed, the managerial logic revealed by our study happens to be even more important in non-profit WISEs than in for-profit WISEs.

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