

ManaGlobal: Globalised governance norms and local management and business practices in Africa and on the Arab peninsula (H2020-MSCA-RISE-2019 GA-823744, cf. www.managlobal.hypotheses.org/)

Introduction: This proposal for the MSCA conference award aims to demonstrate how the ManaGlobal project fosters collaborative research through scientific knowledge discovery and inter-sectoral mobility of researchers across Europe, Africa and Arab countries. The project ensures widening participation amongst policy makers, business enterprises and researchers across the regions. ManaGlobal is an interdisciplinary research project across social scientists which provides opportunities for new insights on how and why businesses and their leaders manage their enterprises in a specific way. The following sections provide a summary of the project.

Arguments: Most of the studies on management and organization in African and Arab countries have focussed on the symptoms of low economic results of enterprises and limited opportunities for innovation and creativity. The recent predictions by major international strategy consulting firms such as McKinsey and the Boston Group express concerns about the unsatisfactory economic growth of African and Arab countries and the advantage, as a result, many new global competitors from emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil are taking over many European and North American investors. **This signals a major global shift in international business management thinking as new and diverse ideas and approaches to doing business come together from within and outside the traditional and post-colonial boundaries.**

In this context, **ManaGlobal is an innovative research project that seeks to explore with evidence the type of management approaches practiced in selected African and Arab countries** amidst an increasing but not satisfying interpretation of the current situation. ManaGlobal will go beyond the review of literature and critical academic debates to investigate the realities on the ground through a collaborative, explorative and ethnographic research that will result in a clearer diagnosis and a better understanding of the practice of business and management in African and Arab countries. As Africa and the Arab world are important for the European Union, we consider that a project whose results will contribute to an improvement of the economic situation of these regions last but not least, would trigger less transnational migrations to the European continent which represents a crucial scientific and political challenge.

There is a need for a clear understanding of the management of local and international enterprises in Africa and Arab countries because:

there is an apparent **lack in the literature on management and leadership in African and Arab countries** as most of the recent studies are limited in scope and unconvincing in their theoretical and methodological approaches;

the decision makers in general and managers in particular of both public and private sector organizations have encountered increasing challenges of **having to balance between the demands of a globalising power of business and the requirements of a localising power of culture and politics;**

the complexity of the **eminent economic, social and political changes** has very often resulted in contradictory and problematic outcomes, especially where opportunities for development, in terms of labour and raw materials, are available but not properly used.

The consequence of this lack of understanding of business and management practices is a mere concentration on trying to tackle the symptoms of problems not the roots of the problem that are to be found in **glocalisation processes. The concept of glocalisation can be explained by particular mixtures of local traditions and global management and governance approaches.**

By studying African and Arab countries, we target to better understand a complex process of hybridization between i) globalized governance standards, mostly inspired by the North American and European discourse and, ii) local standards in doing business that are the products of local customs and sometimes political regimes. These factors are often overlooked because they are specific but profoundly alter the exercise of business management and make unpredictable the impact of management precepts taught in business schools, since they are applied outside the legal framework of the economic and social context in which they were designed. Our hypothesis from the state of the literature and our exploratory research is that hybridization processes take locally specific forms and that these forms can be distinguished for the different generations of leaders in the South. In fact, there is a duality of standards and global requirements, originating from world-centres of financial capitalism and local ways of doing business and managing organizations. This duality introduces a high diversity - insufficiently studied - in the modes of control and business management, but also a gap between what is officially declared and what happens in practice in companies.

ManaGlobal integrates the fact that globalization cannot be reduced to a simple convergence model of management and a unified form of governance of enterprises. Under the process of homogenization of the legal, financial and accounting sector, under the transnational doctrines, regulations, standards and business techniques, is hidden a **plethora of different ways of running a business and ensuring its economic success.** Therefore, ManaGlobal is based on the understanding that because of globalization, **African and Arab countries are attracting investments and with them management practices from non-European countries,** they are developing their own business practices despite a limited success. African and Arab countries are experiencing **significant shifts in their strategic alliances especially with the increasing presence of Chinese and other non-European investors in the region.** Of course, these shifts of economic and political allegiances pose a challenge to future European investors and this is why ManaGlobal is crucial for Europe at this time, as it will participate in the strengthening of future collaborations among and between European, African and Arab businesses and academic institutions before it is too late.

In that context, ManaGlobal's main objective is to study and understand the hybridization of business and management practices in African and Arab countries, and to develop a theoretical framework that may help future business leaders and managers to act locally and think globally.

To achieve this main objective, **five scientific objectives (SO)** have been identified:

SO1: To analyse and compare the theories of managing organizations in different cultural and business contexts, crossing the European and Arab/African state-of-the-art on the subjects and the economic and sociological approaches

SO2: To assess the real business practices in enterprises and to compare with the theoretical and "leader" visions in order to understand the causes of performance failures and successes

SO3: To examine the education, training and business backgrounds of African/Arab successful company managers in relation to their concrete management experience in "real life"

SO4: To develop a research-based theoretical framework for the understanding of business and management practices in African/Arab companies

SO5: To make recommendations to policy and decision-makers and to design training programmes on "business and management of organizations" in African and Arab countries to future local and international leaders and managers.

Therefore, ManaGlobal will contribute to research on management in Africa and Arab countries through the development of a pioneering collaborative and networking team of African, Arab and European scholars and practitioners including business leaders, managers and institutional decision-makers.

We believe that these pioneering exchanges and collaborations between the academic community, institutions and enterprises, and the intersectoral and interregional transfer of knowledge and skills through research, secondments and networking activities will advance the understanding of contemporary debates and inform the development of targeted policies of the European Union on socio-economic processes in Africa and the Arab countries.

Originality of the project: ManaGlobal will study local large, medium and small enterprises as well as multinational corporations, including home-grown multinational enterprises of African or Arab origin. Two enterprises of this last category in Morocco, Maghreb Steel and Saham Group, are thus partners of the consortium whereas the other companies will be actively involved in the project without being members of the consortium. Instead we include in Ghana, Senegal and Cameroon local employer organizations that have narrow contacts to the economic sector.

ManaGlobal is an international RISE project. A multidisciplinary team of partners has developed ManaGlobal because this research project requires specialists of several disciplines such as **economics, sociology, law, organizational behaviour, ethnography, business and management**, who will work collaboratively. **Furthermore, essential enterprises for case studies and employer organizations interested in the project have been included in the consortium and will participate with secondments, mainly for training purposes.**

Literature review and fieldwork research (semi-structured interviews, observations) will be conducted using the up-to-date literature and research tools of each discipline. **This interdisciplinary approach will allow the analysis of the ways in which legacies of economies affect the political, social and economic life of communities.** Thanks to a precise schedule of international staff mobility and of workshops and networking activities, multiple opportunities will allow the implementation of the ground-breaking dialogue proposed by ManaGlobal. Based on a balanced sharing of knowledge and expertise between African, Arab and European team members, the research and training activities will involve experienced and junior academic researchers as well as non-academic advisors and research facilitators. ManaGlobal activities will be implemented with the objective to promote and support scientific and economic cooperation between African, Arab and European partners.

ManaGlobal will become a prime producer of knowledge on business and management in Africa and the Arab countries and as such will have a lasting impact on the wider research and innovation community beyond the region. Research will progress through the development of field training and networking activities; the results of ManaGlobal will represent a landmark of intellectual and social achievement and a future model for successful collaborative projects. In addition, the development of teaching modules on business, management, research methods and corporate governance in Africa and the Arab world has the potential to impact on national and international curricula, and to transform the way we look at cross-cultural management and corporate governance.

The **societal impact will thus be significant** as it will help to understand the vast economic sector of the South that has been influenced by neoliberal globalization and corporate networks created in Africa and on the Arab peninsula. An understanding of the hybrid nature of Southern businesses and of intercultural exchange will contribute to a better functioning of these entities, a better contribution to the economy of the country and a strategy of avoidance of conflicts between different categories of enterprises, characterized by types of globalized governance and various local business practices. Direct contacts with local schools of business and management will **make our results known to the business world in the regions included in the project and local entrepreneurs.**

The dissemination activities will have an **impact on the economic success of business leaders and enterprises** in the countries participating in the project but also in further countries of the region and worldwide. The results of the project will be disseminated widely to enterprises, universities, business institutes, and policy-making organizations. It is expected that **ManaGlobal will open up new paths of research and teaching** mainly in Business schools. Professional associations of young businessmen and businesswomen will be interested in the research outcomes of the ManaGlobal project and the online courses developed by University Rennes 2. The close links of university institutes in the South with political and economic leaders (employer organizations) will permit to create new programmes for young people who want to create a business, thus influencing economic policies in the countries of the region.

