

# *ABOUT SOCIAL INNOVATION: EPISTEMOLOGICAL, TECHNICAL, THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE ACADEMIC PRODUCTION FROM 2008 TO 2012*

## **SOBRE INOVAÇÃO SOCIAL: CONSIDERAÇÕES EPISTEMOLÓGICAS, TÉCNICAS, TEÓRICAS E METODOLÓGICAS DA PRODUÇÃO ACADÊMICA NO PERÍODO DE 2008 A 2012**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The present work aimed to delimit the concept of social innovation in its epistemological aspects, theoretical, technical and morphological to support studies on innovations that seek social results. The review of the production, from January/2008 to January/2013, it's noted that the theme has been studied thought different biases in the Business Administration area, which is mostly defined by the Quadrupole analysis of Social Innovation. Findings indicates that the result of actions of organizations and persons being it to solve a problem, develop a new economic or social benefit is the current definition of Social Innovation. This understanding acted as a stimulus to propose a research agenda to build and develop a more consistent understanding of the concept of Social Innovation and determine whether the creation and dissemination of Social Innovation has a relation with the creation of risk and more perceived social value.*

**Keywords:** Social Innovation. Four-Pole Model. Administration.

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## RESUMO

O presente trabalho visou delimitar o conceito de inovação social em seus aspectos epistemológico, morfológico, teórico e técnico, com a finalidade de embasar estudos sobre inovações que buscam resultados sociais. Na revisão da produção, de janeiro/2008 a janeiro/2013, constata-se que a temática tem sido concebida diversificadamente no âmbito da Administração, cujas notas centrais e vieses conceituais da noção de inovação social o Modelo Quadripolar de análise sumariza. Os achados mostram que o resultado da ação de organizações e pessoas, seja à solução de problemas, seja para concepção, desenvolvimento e difusão de um novo valor econômico e social, é a concepção vigente. Este entendimento instigou a proposição de uma agenda de pesquisa, tais como aumentar a busca pela edificação do constructo inovação social e determinar se a ocorrência da dinâmica de criação e difusão de valor em inovações sociais se relaciona com criação de risco e maior valor social percebido.

**Palavras-chave:** Inovação Social. Modelo Quadripolar. Administração.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The world economic crisis is currently a global concern, affecting not only developing countries, but nations located in developed regions as well. Given this context, one can say that this crisis is more unsettling, provoking in governments and societies, in defenders of liberalism and the welfare state, the need for returning to the debates about new economic means of social integration that can create, at the same time, strategies that link productive activities to devices that address and include people who are in situations of social vulnerability. In this scenario of uncertainty about the future, especially regarding the issues of employment and income, an interest for actions that result in the strengthening of social conditions, not only at an enterprise level, but in communities as well, is a reality.

It should be noted that the development of organizational initiatives that contribute economically to the overcoming of barriers with new or reformulations of existing solutions is not new. However, the possibilities of “combining different sets of knowledge” (TIDD; BESSANT; PAVITT, 2008, p. 35) and reorganizing economic relations with the explicit purpose of offering other answers to unsatisfactory and troublesome social situations are usually branded as social innovation. And yet, even though there are already theoretical definitions on what can be understood as social innovation, as noted by Pol and Ville (2009), when analyzing the literature produced, against its social results, the conceptual trivialization is confirmed.

More specifically, when consulting texts about the subject it can be observed that these studies reflect some conceptual confusion and great misunderstanding involving the concept. Based on this scope it was established as the purpose of this article the delimitation of the use of the term social innovation to its epistemological, morphological, theoretical and technical aspects. In this line, the purpose of this paper is to development a semi-structured analysis related to visions and pre-established concepts about social innovation, seeking to transit through concepts proposed by authors, which represent new challenges that have been demoted by the economic dynamics of the contemporary society. To this end, the scientific production about social innovation for the period of January 2008 to July 2012 was revised in seven databases.

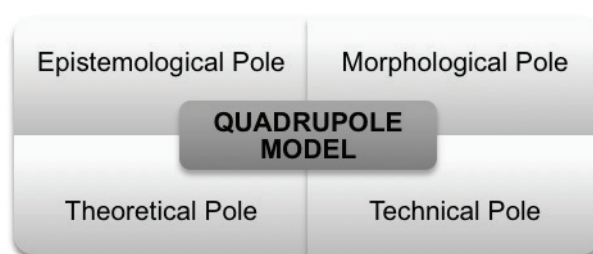
The result of this study is placed in the following two sections, with the analysis of 37 papers. The study was structured based on the methodology proposed by Bruyne, Herman and De Schoutheete (1975). In this methodology, the data and postulates are put into a comprehension grid known as the Quadrupole Model, shifting the analysis beyond a one-dimensional knowledge, confined to the standard procedures (LESSARD-HÉBERT; GOYETTE; BOUTIN, 2008). The intention

was that through the use of this methodological device, confirmation and recognition of different approaches to the presented panorama would be possible, by listing concepts, hypotheses and theories relative to an area of the innovation construct, in this case, the social one.

Finally, the last section of this paper brings a discussion of the results and conclusions that were allowed to be reached by the study, and a presentation of the epistemological, technical, theoretical and methodological understanding that the authors consider as social innovation, as well. Based on this scope, the findings instigate the identification of gaps and the proposition of a research agenda on the topic, allowing the deepening and elucidation of the issues addressed in this paper.

## 2 METHODOLOGICAL REFERENCE

In order to proceed with the research reported in this paper, given the different approaches at hand and in search of clarifying the social innovation concept, giving it identity, while still considering the temporal gap, the methodological choice of literature analysis fell within the framework of data and postulates articulated by the Lessard- Hébert, Goyette and Boutin (2008, p. 15) model, since it is understood that the conception of the methodological practice should be designed “as a quadrupole space built in a given field of knowledge”. This approach, which ensures the system of investigation in the present study, is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Dynamics of survey research.  
**Source:** Adapted from Hébert, Goyette and Boutin (2008, p. 16).

The technique consists, basically, in analyzing ontologically and epistemologically the fundamentals employed by authors who researched a particular field of study. It is argued that this methodology allows to deepen the construction of the object of analysis through these instances named poles. The constitutive postulates and the criteria of analysis for this Quadrupole model are shown in Table 1.

INSTANCE	CONSTITUTIVE POSTULATES	CRITERIAS
<b>Epistemological Pole</b>	Construction of the object of knowledge in its discursive dimension, either by paradigms that position it given the type of existing relationship, delimiting positions, or through scientific languages that distinguish the spheres of influence of the fields of knowledge, or, still, the delimitation of scientific criteria.	Type of Innovation (OECD, 2006) Impact Classification (TIDD, BESSANT & PAVITT, 2008) Value Creation and Capture (CHESBROUGH; APPELYARD, 2007) Information Analysis Unit Targeted and Achieved Results Scientificity Criteria (FLICK, 2009; LESSARD-HÉBERT; GOYETTE; BOUTIN, 2008; SILVERMAN, 2009)

<b>Theoretical Pole</b>	Hypothesis formulation or verification and refutation, with postulation of new hypothesis in the final course.	Method Articulation (LESSARD-HÉBERT; GOYETTE; BOUTIN, 2008; SILVERMAN, 2009)
<b>Morphological Pole</b>	Organization of the information.	Result Representation (LESSARD-HÉBERT; GOYETTE; BOUTIN, 2008; POUPART; DESLAURIERS; GROULX; LAPERRIÈRE; MAYER; PIRES, 2008; SILVERMAN, 2009)
<b>Technical Pole</b>	Research instrumentation through the methods of investigation employed.	Data Collection and Registration Techniques (FLICK, 2009; LESSARD-HÉBERT; GOYETTE; BOUTIN, 2008; REY, 2005)

**Table 1:** Basis of analysis of the Quadrupole Model.

**Source:** Developed from Hébert, Goyette and Boutin (2008).

Along this line, the next section considers the Quadrupole analysis of the investigation process on social innovation, unfolding into three others: the first one contains the analysis of the Epistemological Pole, the following includes the discussion of the Theoretical and Morphological Poles, held together as recommended by Lessard-Hébert, Goeyette and Boutin (2008); and the third subsection examines the Technical Pole. This arrangement of the analysis, also suggested by said authors, aimed to facilitate the apprehension of the theoretical articulation on social innovation, seeing that the configuration of the object of study is translated in its own exposure.

## 2.1 Social Innovation Through the Quadrupole Model Lens

To explore the state-of-the-art of innovation, databases from ABI/Inform Global, Emerald and Oxford Journals, JSTOR Arts & Science I Collection, Sage Journal on Line, SpringerLink, Scielo and Spell were consulted, since these portals are the vehicles that cover the periodicals of highest impact in the related literature. The data collection for this article occurred in July 2012, having its timeframe limited to articles published from January 2008 to this date.

It was found that, in the seven separately consulted bases, except for the year of 2010, with only four papers published, the publications remained constant over the studied period. Forty articles were retrieved, however, from the total, only thirty seven were analyzed, three of them were excluded<sup>1</sup>. In the search that led to the choice of these articles, the basis adopted was the existence of the single term social innovation and or its termination in English or Spanish in the title, abstract, keywords or subject.

About this data collection phase, it is worth mentioning that only one of the articles was written in Spanish, five in Portuguese, and the rest in English. In this inquiry it was also perceived that until now the social innovation theme has not been favored by any specific journal (even if its bias is not to promote market-oriented practices, but rather scrutiny of actions that contain social content), having the articles scattered in 31 different scientific journals.

<sup>1</sup> One of the articles is written in Croatian (BECIC, E.; DABIC, M. Analysis of Croatian business sector investment in R and D. *Revija za Sociologiju*, v. 39, Jun/2008, p. 1-2); another in German (TAFFERTSHOFER, A. Der coaching-boom. EinePrintmedienanalyse. *Organisationsberatung, Supervision, Coaching*, 2008, v. 15, n. 2, p. 194-206), languages outside of the author's reading domain; and the article Networks as agents of innovation: teacher networking in the context of vocational and professional higher education reforms (TAFEL-VIIA; K., LOOGMA, K., LASSUR, S.; ROOSIPÖLD, A. *Vocations and Learning*, May/2012) was not granted free access by the CAPES Journal Portal.

### *Epistemological Pole*

To Lessard-Hébert, Goeyette and Boutin (2008) the analysis should start with the Epistemological Pole, because it's in this sphere that an investigation is determined, and not in the technique used, since the meaning of the object of analysis is given by itself. Based on this position, it was decided not to put emphasis on definitions that lead to the development of indicators used for monitoring the innovation construct, but rather on investigation preferences that define the object of study and, sequentially, their methodological options. For this reason, four parameters within the existing paradigm of innovation were added, usually shared by the academic community, even though the position of researchers can be determined by different approaches:

- type of innovation, having adopted the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2006) position, innovations are understood as of product, process, organizational or marketing;
- impact rating, according to the degree of novelty (TIDD; BESSANT; PAVITT, 2008);
- creating and development of value (CHESBROUGH; APPELYARD, 2007), in which it was weighed whether innovations were created by organizations or communities, and if they were later developed by organizations or communities; and
- dimension of the innovation (CHESBROUGH; APPELYARD, 2007), in which attention was paid to whether innovation was developed in an environmental, organizational or individual level.

From the four types of innovation proposed by the Oslo Manual (OECD, 2006), in its third edition, the authors' comprehension of the analyzed forms of change was pursued. In the group researched, it was found that 33 of the articles, 89% of the total, valued the scrutiny of organizational changes in eight different aspects regarding: organizational practices (BRUNSTEIN; RODRIGUES; KIRSCHBAUM, 2008; CHAND, 2009; DACIN; DACIN; TRACEY, 2011; FARAH, 2008; GARCÍA; GONZÁLEZ; ACEBRÓN, 2012; JOVER; CERESO, 2008; LE BER; BRANZEI, 2009, 2010; LESSEM; SCHIEFFER; MOUSAVIAN, 2010; MCMULLEN; ADOBOR, 2011; MORGAN, 2008; VOß; SMITH; GRIN, 2009); learning and disseminating knowledge (ANDERSEN; LARSEN; MØLLER, 2009; FERNANDO, 2011; HANKE; STARK, 2009; KICKUL; GRIFFITHS; BACQ, 2010; MACIEL; FERNANDES, 2011; PÉREZ; BOTERO, 2011; WEST; HANNAFIN, 2011); collaboration, networks and governance (CONCILIO; DE BONIS; MARSH; TRAPANI, 2012; MACLEAN; HARVEY; GORDON, 2012; PAKAKOSTAS, 2011; POT; KONINGSVELD; ERG, 2009; POT; VAAS, 2008; TEETS, 2011); urban space arrangement (ANDRÉ; REIS, 2009; ANDRÉ; ROUSSELLE, 2010); strategic orientation (POT, 2011); innovation systems (ADAM, 2011); organizational culture (D'AMATO; ROOME, 2009); and information management (JONES, 2011).

In other studies, it was found that while Doi and Yamada (2010) discussed social innovation as deriving from a new product (software), Tavalleti and Velde (2008) focused on the aspect of process, studying the implementation of a significantly improved mean of distribution. In two researches, from Andrianova and Yeletsikh (2012) and Lefebvre (2012), innovations that leveraged changes were found related to marketing experiences. And, in two other studies, from Bouchard (2012) and Hutchins and Hammers (2012), the authors understood that social innovation can be achieved by a combination of organizational practices, either with processes or products, respectively.

With regard to the way to innovate, considering that this aspect influences what is innovated, in this study, a restricted sense was adopted, in other words, the researches were analyzed taking into account the role of changes, defined either by a minor and moderate enhancement

or by an improvement “that transforms the way in which we see or use things” (TIDD; BESSANT; PAVITT, 2008, p. 32). It is introduced here that not all innovations are established in the same way, however, the reported changes were pondered in terms of the impact that the novelty obtained, according to the classification proposed by Tidd, Bessant and Pavitt (2008), that is, the improvement was judged either as incremental or as radical. In this scope, the prevailing trend in the analyzed studies is that the impact brought in the categories presented, influences aspects without any profound alterations in the context, occurring gradually. The study that was an exception and that distinguished itself from the others was the one by Le Ber and Branzei (2009), which combined innovations of ‘sustainability’ to those of ‘cataclysm’.

In general, research suggests that innovations often come from unexpected places. Because of this, and considering that there are common points, the approach of Chesbrough and Applyard (2007) was adopted, for whom creation (action in which innovative ideas are forged) and value capturing (action in which the innovative ideas are transformed in reality) are related in a two-dimensional matrix.

In these terms, from the texts analyzed 52% identified that the organizations develop a logic of creation, but that value capturing is redirected, or revitalized, by the environment (ANDRIANOVA; YELETSKIKH, 2012; ANDRÉ; REIS, 2009; BRUNSTEIN; RODRIGUES; KIRSCHBAUM, 2008; CHAND, 2009; CONCILIO; DE BONIS, 2012; DOI; YAMADA, 2010; FARAH, 2008; FERNANDO, 2011; GARCÍA; GONZÁLEZ; ACEBRÓN, 2012; JONES, 2011; JOVER; CERESO, 2008; KICKUL; GRIFFITHS; BACQ, 2010; LE BER; BRANZEI, 2010; LEFEBVRE, 2012; LESSEM; SCHIEFFER; MOUSSAVIAN, 2010; MACLEAN; HARVEY; GORDON, 2012; PÉREZ; BOTERO, 2011; POT, 2011; VOß; SMITH; GRIN, 2009); 27% report that both creation and capture of innovations are held in the organization itself (ANDERSEN; LARSEN; MØLLER, 2009; ANDRÉ; ROUSSELLE, 2010; D’AMATO; ROOME, 2009; HANKE; STARK, 2009; HUTCHINS, 2012; LE BER; BRANZEI, 2009; MCMULLEN; ADOBOR, 2011; POT; KONINGSVELD; ERG, 2009; TAVOLETTI; VELDE, 2008; WEST; HANNAFIN, 2011); 19% describe creation and capture of innovative value as being driven by the community (ADAM, 2011; BOUCHARD, 2012; DACIN; DACIN; TRACEY, 2011; MACIEL; FERNANDES, 2011; MORGAN, 2008; PAPAOKOSTAS, 2011; TEETS, 2011). The logic of value capture by the organization through the innovation created by the community was identified by only one study that describes the appropriation of the knowledge generated from the community by an organization (POR; VAAS, 2008).

It was found that the analysis of innovation impact is understood through three levels of units of analysis, which represent the possibility of positioning the studies on the occurrence of environmental, organizational and individual innovations. In the conducted examination, only five of these studies focused their analysis on innovation on the level of individuals, stressing the role of the so-called social entrepreneurs (DACIN; DACIN; TRACEY, 2011; KICKUL; GRIFFITHS; BACQ, 2010; LESSEM; SCHIEFFER; MOUSSAVIAN, 2010; MACLEAN; HARVEY; GORDON, 2012; WEST; HANNAFIN, 2011). Part of the authors, represented by 11 studies, see the innovative content of the acts based on the scrutiny of organizational initiatives, where actions are associated with manifestations of the studied enterprises, whether they are Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (BRUNSTEIN; RODRIGUES; KIRSCHBAUM, 2008; GARCÍA; GONZÁLEZ; ACEBRÓN, 2012), universities (FERNANDO, 2011; PÉREZ; BOTERO, 2011), governmental centers (POT; VAAS, 2008), or private companies from various fields, such as: I. health (LE BER; BRANZEI, 2009); II. bridging organizations<sup>2</sup> (MCMULLEN; ADOBOR, 2011); III. circus (ANDRÉ; REIS, 2009); IV. general or undefined (D’AMATO; ROOME, 2009; HANKE; STARK, 2009; HUTCHINS, 2012). In the remaining 21 articles, about 57% of the total, spoke about innovation, emphasizing the collective nature and transformation of social relations, addressing actions under the political-social aspect, i.e. environmental innovation.

<sup>2</sup> Bridging organizations are independent organizations that provide mechanisms for other organizations and for individuals to work together.



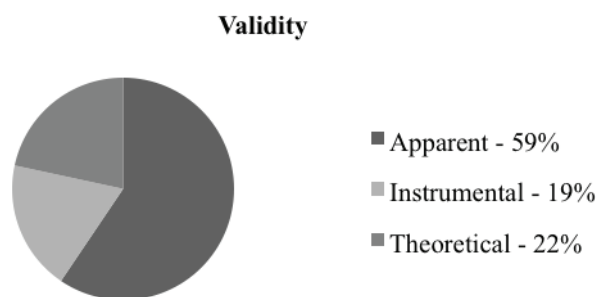
The study of the applicability of innovation was covered by the researches. For this purpose, the responses to the unsatisfactory and problematic social situations, presented by the authors, were explored as part of the innovation construct. In most cases, when exploring innovation, the option for this process is associated, among other things, to the maintenance of competitiveness and sustainability. On the other hand, when innovations are related to social actions, in turn, the impossibility of reducing the existing relations between practices and impacts is formulated into interpretations that are not easily delimited, but are accepted as socially valuable elements. In this sense, some interests are more strongly emphasized, such as:

- the increase on education, welfare, employment, health, justice, social (re)integration, ethics, environmental issues, quality of life, sustainability, engagement and social participation, transparency, social capital, democracy, entrepreneurship; or
- reduction of crime, poverty, hunger, corruption, gender issues.

Other interests are also defended; however, they are described by the authors as general kind of social impact, whose outlines are vague. In this context, the work of Hutchins (2012) is mentioned, which relates the happiness of a community as one of the perceived innovative social impacts. However, alongside these interests that were mentioned and their complements, it was verified in the articles that elements like economic development and productivity in responses considered as innovative brought them more acceptance. Better yet, the studies show evidence of the existence of a relationship between aligned social results with economic insertion and benefits, associated with the business logic.

Still within the epistemological pole, it must be evaluated if the articles describe the scientific criteria they used in their studies. As done by Lessard-Hébert, Goyette and Boutin (2008, p. 63), "it will be addressed here from a general epistemological perspective", by analyzing scientific criteria that receive attention and the same denomination in qualitative and quantitative research. Thus, one speaks of objectivity, validity and fidelity. Flick (2009) states that to assess objectivity, or rather, test the found evidence (SILVERMAN, 2009), one can use two procedures: either analyze the coherence of meanings raised with two or more independent researches, or confront the consistency of the study with the raw data. The revealed postulates made by the researchers, consistent with the measured result in the next criterion, showed that only 19% of the authors attempted to confront the knowledge obtained with the so-called empirical studies; on the other hand, the rest of the authors concentrated their analysis on consensus with peers.

By validity, it's meant authenticity of explanation for the authors (SILVERMAN, 2009) through their interpretation of the results. Based on this scope, the typology proposed by Lessard-Hébert, Goyette and Boutin (2008) was perpetuated, where the validity can be: apparent, in which the data appears as obvious; instrumental, occurring when two instruments produce similar results; and theoretical, in which a theory confirms the facts. Figure 2 represents proportionally what was verified on the validity types found in the texts:



**Figure 2:** Validity Types.

In the last scientificity criterion examined in the Epistemological Pole, the meaning adopted for fidelity is the one by Hébert, Goyette and Boutin (2008, p. 80), in the statement “fidelity is essentially based on investigative procedures whose description is explicit” not engendered in techniques or instruments, but in theory. Under this parameter, it was considered that all 37 analyzed texts sought results that were independent from the circumstances of the research (these results were extended beyond the data and the results of their studies).

#### *Theoretical and Morphological Poles*

The technical pole determines the involvement of a researcher facing a given conceptual formulation that proposes rules of interpretation to the problematic of an investigation. (LESSARD-HÉBERT; GOYETTE; BOUTIN, 2008). This idea aligns itself to what was postulated by Silverman (2009, p. 27), to whom “the methodologies cannot be true or false, only more or less useful”. In social research, in a macro-level, the rules are articulated in methods, being the most mentioned rules in literature specified in qualitative and quantitative. Based on this scope, it was found in the broken down articles that the choice of argument development about social innovation followed the qualitative method.

In addition, due to nature of the scientific object, the Morphological Pole is understood as the necessary structure for the construction of the method present in the research activity (LESSARD-HÉBERT; GOYETTE; BOUTIN, 2008), since it’s about the equipping and exposing of the surveyed data, representing the product of this construction. Lessard-Hébert, Goyette and Boutin (2008) state that the representation of the results in research is achieved by three postulates: I. model formatting; II. explanation (external opportunity) and comprehension (internal causality), through six strategies (enumeration, plausibility and selection, metaphor use, variable fractioning, abstraction and establishment of a logical connection); and III. objectification of the findings, scrutinized through three types of valorization: of neutrality and observation from the outside (type 1-model), of neutrality and observation from the inside (type 2-model) and of pre-notion and observation from below (type 3-model) (POUPART *et al.*, 2008).

Only two of the recovered papers – Doi and Yamada (2010) and Le Ber and Branzei (2009) – have emphasized their conclusions using reduced data and organized models. As for the explanation and comprehension adopted by the authors, the strategies found in the texts are distributed in the following way: one, Farah (2008), sought to discover whether there was reoccurrence of elements, organizing the data by enumeration; eleven other authors (ADAM, 2011; ANDRÉ; REIS, 2009; ANDRÉ; ROUSSELLE, 2010; FERNANDO, 2011; KICKUL; GRIFFITHS; BACQ, 2010; LE BER; BRANZEI, 2010; MACLEAN; HARVEY; GORDON, 2012; MCMULLEN; ADOBOR, 2011;



PÉREZ; BOTERO, 2011; TAVOLETTI; VELDE, 2008; WEST; HANNAFIN, 2011) in order to unify the data comprehension, constructed a logical evidence; and the remaining 25 authors, sought to emphasize in their explanations relationships between the elements, through the established settings, with plausibility and selection. Finally, all texts resorted to the objectification of the results based on scrutiny by the first model-type by Poupart *et al.* (2008).

#### *Technical Pole*

In this Pole, it was sought to capture the articulation of the instruments through which the researcher makes contact with the objectified reality, considering their methodological choice. The definition of instrument was borrowed from Rey (2005, p. 42), that considers “all situations or resources that allow others to express themselves in the context of the relationship that characterizes the research”. Therefore, two main parameters are utilized in this pole: techniques employed for data collection and techniques used for data analysis (LESSARD-HÉBERT; GOYETTE; BOUTIN, 2008). In equivalence, it is said that other data collecting techniques can be added to the qualitative approach: observation, interviews and focus groups (FLICK, 2009; SULVERMAN, 2009). As for the techniques used in the collection and analysis of the data by the researchers from the articles considered, 26 texts make exclusive use of data collection and bibliographic and documental analysis, although they do not state their methodological contributions throughout the drafting of the texts. The remaining researchers, representing 19% of the total, are distributed as follows.

The data collection made exclusively by focus groups is limited to the texts by Pérez and Botero (2001), while observation is combined with interviews, in the texts of Brunstein, Rodrigues and Kirschbaum (2008) and Maclean, Harvey and Gordon (2012). Data gathering by interviews were limited to nine texts, one by structured interview, André and Rousselle (2010), another by non-structured interview (WEST; HANNAFIN, 2011) and six by semi-structured interview (ANDRÉ; REIS, 2009; FERNANDO, 2011; KICKUL; GRIFFITHS; BACQ, 2010; LE BER; BRANZEI, 2009, 2010; MCMULLEN; ADOBOR, 2011). Regarding the techniques employed in the analysis, it was generally not made explicit by the authors. It is emphasized, in this sense, the texts of Pérez and Botero (2011) and West and Hannafin (2011), that employed the analysis by incidents, Le Ber and Branzei, that used a partner level analysis (in the 2009 text) and a content analysis (in the article of 2010), and also Brunstein, Rodrigues and Kirschbaum (2008), using textual information analysis.

### 3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

It is considered that by following the prescriptions of Lessard-Hébert, Goyette and Boutin (2008) for the study of texts, through the Quadrupole Analysis Model, a valid alternative for the scrutiny of a complex and not yet fully structured phenomenon was adopted. By deliberately raising the revised literature from the past five years, it was possible to delimit the use of the term social innovation in its epistemological, morphological, theoretical and technical aspects. In this sense, when performing the analysis of the perspectives adopted by the authors and their operationalization, a growing need for a theoretical framework to guide social innovation researchers, as well as to foster categories of analysis that could support the theoretical construction of the object was perceived.

In epistemological terms, the analysis provided contextualized and multidimensional aspects to the construct of social innovation, given that the adopted strategy sought to demonstrate the references adopted by the researchers in their premises. First of all, it is worth men-

tioning that the innovation construct has been regarded primarily as a result of new management practices introduced in the organizations, although it includes some other aspects such as dynamic management, flexible organization, smarter work, development of skills and competences, and networks between organizations, becoming, as indicated by Pot and Vaas (2008), a broader concept. Still regarding the understanding of the types of innovation, it is noteworthy that when the authors' perspectives include networks and governance it draws attention to the role of power and strategies that promote diffusion. When seen as a result of a marketing practice, instead of emphasizing the commercial and business aspects, like the increase in profit, the approach is employed so as to promote perspectives that enhance social value.

It is worth noting that researches predominately represent social innovations as steps or small changes that lead to social change, or, to gradual transformation of social relations that are at the origin of the problems. This feature is also observed by Tidd, Bessant and Pavitt (2008), that when innovation is less radical it is more likely to be adopted, or rather, innovations that are more aligned with the context in which they are located have a better prospect of being accepted and widespread. And, therefore, as Dacin, Dacin and Tracey (2011) concluded, the adoption of innovation obtains legitimacy and is more successful. However, social innovation cannot be considered as resulting exclusively from voluntary and rational actions, also arising from the conjunction of structural impasses and the actions of social movements, as noted by the studies of André and Rousselle (2010) and Andersen, Larsen and Møller (2009).

Consequently, and in consonance with the other established epistemological aspects, the researchers report that in social innovation much of the value creation (about 80% of the total) comes from organizations and or are directed toward communities (52%), or remain in their organizational context (27%). In this sense, the researchers suggest that there is a better prospect for the adopted of innovation when it comes from organizations. There is an agreement among researchers that the pressure to innovate is an integral part of social organization (BOUCHARD, 2012; CHAND, 2009; LESSEM; SCHIEFFER; MOUSSAVIAN, 2010; MACLEAN; HARVEY; GORDON, 2012; POT, 2011). However, insofar as social innovations are created and accepted they can either be widely disseminated, being transformed, for instance, in a public policy (CONCILIO *et al.*, 2012; POT, 2011; POT; VAAS, 2008), or remain locally incorporated (FERNANDO, 2011).

The unit of analysis choice that the authors face is generally simplified in environmental, organizational and individual levels. That being said, it is worth mentioning that each research contemplated by this study presented innovation, consciously choosing one of the three levels, in other words, the argumentative structure of the postulates was organized to correspond to the valuation of the authors' point of view, was kept in mind. This kind of choice is a common strategy among researchers; however, it can not be reaching, in fact, the social innovation phenomenon, since the innovative action that takes place in one of the levels cannot be reduced to a single analytical perspective.

For instance, determining that the core of a social innovation be the analysis of a social entrepreneur, like it occurred in 14% of the studies, does not cover relevant aspects of the impact of this type of innovation. In contrast, the tendency to emphasize the social innovation construct in the environmental context, from a social articulation dimension, seeing it as a transforming perspective of redistribution (MORGAN, 2008), democratic development (ANDERSEN; LARSEN; MØLLER, 2009) and state regulation (TEETS, 2011), is not exploited by all authors, being present in only 57% of the articles. This result indicates that the idea of social innovation covering the desired dimensions of the academic environment is questionable. Perhaps this statement relates both to the ambiguity and to limitations still present in the concept.

As for the successful social results achieved from innovation, two general theses were identified. One of the perspectives understands that social innovations increment solutions that lead to social change, under the double impulse to create new idea combinations, resources and capacities that attract value (LE BER; BRANZEI, 2009). The other point of view at hand understands that implemented social innovation reduce social problems, and mainly solves problems, like its presented in the texts of André and Reis (2009) and Concilio, De Bonis and Marsh (2012), for example. These points, as observed by Maclean, Harvey and Gordon (2012), significantly awakened academic interest in the form of numerous attempts at the conceptualization of social innovation.

Thus, the understanding that social innovations are not just answers to specific social needs, as announced in the introductory section of the text, is broadened, as is the understanding that they are also proposals that seek social change (BOUCHARD, 2012). Nevertheless, the analysis indicates that the social results reflected in the innovations reported by the authors appear as adjuncts along the path, since the main social solutions presented emerge from actions that can be commercially established. Therefore, the word social is conceived around the economic development of the organizations, and, consequently, of the contexts it articulates. Figure 3 allows the explanation of the social innovation construct.

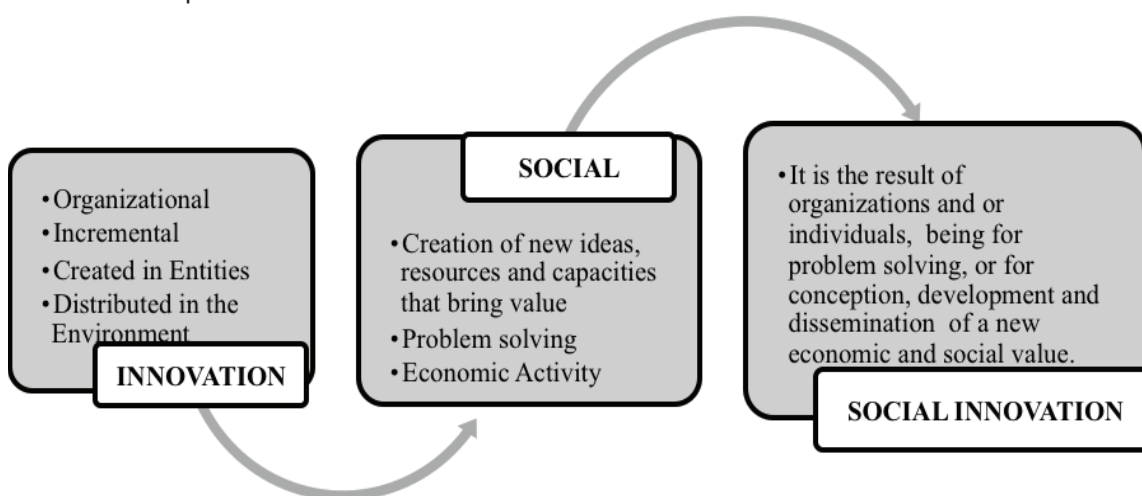


Figure 3: Social Innovation.

Still considering the Epistemological Pole, the theoretical construction of texts is also grounded and revealed in the scientific criteria adopted. As such, the reports indicate that most authors, around 81%, adopt theoretical objectivity, while about 60% motivated their texts on the basis of apparent validity. It was also considered that the authors used the fidelity criterion in their reports, since they presented autonomous results of the research conjectures, even though the parameters were not made explicit. In other words, the researched articles were mostly based on theories and academic speeches, venturing very little into the empirical field of research, aiming to limit the potential insights coming from primary data.

In the second instance of analysis, the Theoretical and Morphological Poles, the object and its respective data research strategy were related. In this research, the qualitative approach revealed in the Theoretical Pole translates into an essentially non-linear selection, based on inductive analysis with postulate formulations in the course of the researches, setting the investigation tone on social innovation. As for the formatting of the results envisioned in the Morphological Pole, if on one hand the objectification of the findings through neutrality and exterior observation were present in all the texts, which, in the academic research domain of

Administration does not come as a surprise, on the other, consistent with the qualitative research strategy, the formatting of models was present in only two of the articles. In turn, it was realized that the understanding of the objects occurred in most cases, appearing in nearly 70% of the texts, through the plausibility and selection strategy, i.e. seeking to highlight the relationships between the research elements.

Finally, in the third instance of analysis, the Technical Pole, it was observed that among the analyzed methodological elements, the exploratory nature of the investigations strikes the eye, represented by the ascendancy of the qualitative approach, seeking to probe and define characteristics that can serve as reputable guides to both the field structure and the practical orientation. However, it is worth mentioning that the major adaptation of researches based only on secondary data is considered, like in Flick (2009), with restraint and skepticism, given that it can take the form of dead ends when they limit themselves to postulate the notion of object, in this case social innovation, built and selected primarily due to the discipline.

Once the three instances are mentioned, the theoretical implication, in essence, that result from the scrutiny of the articulation of epistemological, morphological, theoretical and technical aspects of the social innovation construct is translated in Figure 3. It is assessed that the emergence of aspects that were revealed during this study helped to consolidate new knowledge about social innovation, corroborating to the understanding that knowledge is not something that's done, even if it started from a particular theoretical reference. Note that the Quadrupole Model, on its very articulation, has significant force to contribute on the building of the construct, since by deconstructing the points of view presented in the 37 texts included in this analysis, reflections on what has been so far understood as social innovation within the academic environment were improved.

However, as all research is, above all, a discursive practice that represents a choice, as well as a reflection on the texts put its own allegations in debate, it's therefore appropriate to alert to the fact that through this logic, both the arguments developed in this study and the construction of the social innovation construct, explained in Figure 4, may be questionable. Based on this scope, the theoretical construction here held did not dive into the paradigmatic foundations involving the researchers, neither was it supported by an empirical reality. And so, although the Quadrupole Model promotes a fertile interdisciplinary interaction and has the prospect of overcoming linear analysis, nevertheless, the results presented cannot be evaluated as a private vision, even if it's broader and more inclusive.

Therefore, it can still be said that to further these arguments, it's necessary and opportune to continue the debate that continues to seek contributions on social innovation. Thus, as part of the research agenda for future studies, some questions are proposed: I. build the social innovation construct with 'constructions in second degree' (POUPART, 2008), i.e., by incorporating more researches consisting of primary data; II. determine whether the occurrence of the creation and value diffusion dynamic in social innovations relates to the creation of risk and higher perceived social value; III. inquire about implications of employing a theory driven by the business logic, in this case innovation, to explain the praxis of actors conducted by a distinct consistency; and IV. show similarities and differences in the building of the social innovation construct by longitudinal studies.

Finally, the theoretical relevance comes from the great empirical value of the object itself. Therefore, this study highlights that it's not about abandoning the use of the term social innovation, or even promoting actions and researches that contribute to its diffusion and reflection, but it's about using the term apart from the common sense that is many times dazzled around the issue, allowing the deepening and elucidation of the issues addressed throughout this study to proceed.

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