

Celebrating community–university research partnerships: Experiences in Brazil

Crystal Tremblay, Jutta Gutberlet, and Michelle Bonatti

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Celebrating Community-University Research Partnerships: Experiences in Brazil

Dr. Crystal Tremblay, SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow, The Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, University of British Columbia

Dr. Jutta Gutberlet, Professor, Geography Department, University of Victoria

Michelle Bonatti, PhD Candidate, The Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research, Germany

This chapter provides a brief overview of Brazil's national and regional policy initiatives and financial incentives that support collaboration between higher education institutions and society. We discuss two examples of higher education institutions—the University of São Paulo (USP) and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)—and highlight the different structures that have emerged through ‘incubators’ meant to stimulate innovation and entrepreneurial activities. Government support for the incubator model has been increasing at the federal, state and local levels. The national social mobilizing network COEP and the community-based organization CEPAGRO are also featured in this study as examples of successful civic-led partnership research with higher education institutions (HEIs). The information presented in this chapter was collected through documents and websites, in addition to in-depth interviews with key informants at each of the institutions/organizations.

Civil Society and Popular Education in Brazil

With democratization in Brazil, in 1986, began the reformation of institutional roles and structures, and the flourishing of civil society that has shaped contemporary community-university engagement. This re-organization of civil society allowed for a new set of policies to be developed, and created conditions for the establishment of new types of university-based ‘hybrid’ organizations. As part of the shift from an authoritarian regime to democracy, a new Constitution of Brazil was developed in 1988. Now known widely as the *Constituição Cidadã*, or “Citizen Constitution”, it promotes the right to work, the right to a decent wage, the right to social security, and the right to education (Rizzini, 2011). The new constitution also allowed public funds to be allocated to private, community, religious, or philanthropic schools for their support in meeting these rights. In the post-1988 constitutional framework, these institutions must develop policies and

frameworks that link teaching, research and services to communities (*extensão universitária*) and provide tuition-free education in official establishments.

A further development was the Brazilian Educational Law of 1996, which stipulates that universities must develop extension activities alongside teaching and research. These extension services have been emphasized with the National Forum of Extension of Vice Chancellors of Brazilian Public Universities. This permanent forum has put extension in a prominent position, and has stressed its importance as part of the public university mission to meet its social role. Brazil's universities also deliver extension services to provide practical experience for their students. According to the National Forum, extension is the educational, cultural and scientific process that articulates teaching and research and enables the integrated relationship between university and society. This establishes the exchange of systematized academic and popular knowledge. It also involves the democratization of academic knowledge and enables communities to effectively participate in the activities of the University.

Most faculties in Brazil's universities have deans of extension (Marchesan & Senseman, 2010) whose function is to coordinate the programs and services of centres and university units, as well as their products and publications. Extension programs in Brazil also contribute to the diffusion of social technology to disadvantaged communities that are intended to create employment, increase income and motivate participatory actions (Silva, 2006). The 'citizenship laboratory' at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, described in this chapter, provides an example of the processes and outcomes of collaboration. The deans of extension in federal universities are organized as the national forum *Associação Nacional de Instituições Federais de Ensino Superior* (ANDIFES), and also belong to the nationwide Rectors Council, the *Conselho de Reitores das Universidades Brasileiras* (CRUB). The *Brazilian Journal of University Extension/Revista Brasileira de Extensão Universitária* is a publication by the Association of Vice-Presidents for Extension of Brazilian Public Higher Education. Its objective is to increase the interchange of good practices, reflections and results from their extension and outreach programs through a wide network of actors and social institutions.

Brazil's Technological Innovation Law (No. 10.973/2004) was a particularly important turning point in the role of universities as it "established innovation incentive measures and situated scientific and technological research within a productive environment, seeking to create technological autonomy and industrial development in Brazil" (Almeida, 2008, p. 41). This law was intended to encourage strategic partnerships between universities, technological institutes and companies, stimulate the participation of science and technology institutes in the innovation process, and create incentives for innovation within companies (Almeida, 2008). An innovative institutional structure that has emerged as a result has been 'incubators', a hybrid-organization that supports interaction between university, industry and government. The incubators are part of a broader trend of devolution

from “bureaucratic and hierarchical organizations to knowledge-based networks and clusters” (Etzkowitz et al., 2005). It is a shift from central government, where policy has traditionally emanated, to multiple sources of initiatives. The result has been bottom-up initiatives from universities and municipal governments converging with lateral ones from industry groups, regional associations and state governments, as well as top-down programs from the national government.

The incubator model involves the expansion of the academic educational mission from training individuals to educating civil society organizations. The incubators have enabled universities and political groups to create cooperatives and solidarity organizations as a means to combatting poverty, inequality and unemployment. This model has led to a cultural transformation of academia, so that it plays a more active role in society at several levels. As Cervantes (2002, p. 44) suggests, “(r)esearch and teaching activities need to be developed and directed to contribute to economic and social development as well as to the education of students and the advancement of knowledge”.

The incubator concept has been applied to a broad range of industrial and social problems (Cervantes, 2002). The first Technological Incubator of Popular Cooperatives (ITCP) was established at the Graduate Engineering School (COPPE) of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) in 1994. The university was assisted in this effort by the social network called the Committee of Public Entities in Action against Hunger and in Favour of Life (*Comitê de Entidades Públicas no Combate à Fome e pela Vida—COEP*), by the Banco do Brasil Foundation and by the National Innovation Agency (FINEP). COEP played a pivotal role in the creation of the incubator model and engaging with community organizations to enable partnerships and capacity training. The COEP and its partners later created the National Program of Popular Cooperatives Incubators (PRONINC) in 1997 in order to disseminate the model to other Brazilian universities. In 2003, the program came under the coordination of the National Secretariat for Solidarity Economy at the Ministry of Labor and Employment.

The movement has expanded and gained support from universities, government and industry associations. By 2006, there were over 370 incubators in Brazil (Almeida, 2008). The potential of incubators to contribute to social and economic development has made them a subject of public policy both at federal and state levels (Pires et al., 2010).

Funding Mechanisms

There are several mechanisms the government uses to facilitate the involvement of HEIs in community extension programs. For example, the government agency Solidarity Community supports the travel costs for students working on social projects throughout Brazil. In addition, the Brazilian government uses tax exemption to motivate universities with philanthropic status to play a civic role in society.

The main source of research funding for HEIs in Brazil is through the National Secretariat for Science and Technology. Several agencies are under the Secretariat supervision, including the National Research Council (*Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico-CNPq*), the Financing Agency for Studies and Projects (*Financiadora de Estudos de Projetos-FINEP*), four national research laboratories, the Institute for Space Research (*Instituto de Pesquisas Espaciais*), the Research Center for Computer Science (*Centro de Tecnologia para a Informática*)—the Amazon Research Institute (*Instituto de Pesquisa da Amazônia*), and the National Technological Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Tecnologia*). The federal government, through several agencies like FINEP, has substantially increased programs and investments in innovation. The result has been an increase in business dynamics in this field and greater interaction between universities, private industry and civil society.

Expansion and Democratization of Public Education

Structural changes were initiated in 2007 to expand and democratize education opportunities in the Education Development Plan (*Plano de Desenvolvimento da Educação*). Since then several changes have been implemented to provide funding for more seats in public and private universities. The federal government has invested funds into two programs to meet this challenge. The Financing of Higher Education Student Fund (*Fundo de Financiamento ao Estudante do Ensino Superior*) provides funding until completion with a grace period for repayment of the amount borrowed of 18 months at a rate of 3.4 percent per year after graduation. The University for All Program (*Programa Universidade para Todos*) provides scholarships of 25, 50 and 100 percent to economically disadvantaged students in private higher institutions with no repayment (Costa, 2013).

The structural changes also included expanding distance education through the Open University of Brazil (*Universidade Aberta do Brasil*). Data from the Coordination of Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Costa, 2014) show that between 2007 and July 2009, 557 face-to-face support centres were approved and implemented, resulting in the creation of 187,154 seats. By the end of 2013, the system expanded its cooperation network to all public HEIs in Brazil and has created 800,000 seats.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

HEI Case Study 1: University of São Paulo (USP)

The following case study discusses collaborative learning developed at the University of São Paulo (USP), and provides specific examples of community participation in research and outreach. This section provides an in-depth discussion of the *Participatory Sustainable Waste Management* project (PSWM), an international, community-based research collaboration which displayed a deep level of community participation over a prolonged period of time.

Institutional structures

USP is a public, government funded university. Nevertheless, the majority of the incoming students have been educated in private schools. To address this inequity USP implemented an affirmative action policy in 2006 to facilitate the access of students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The *Programa INCLUSP* policy aims to significantly increase the number of students coming from public versus private secondary schools with the aim of reducing inequality in public education (Capuchinho, 2013). As a consequence, the socio-demographic composition of the student population is becoming more diversified.

The office of the Dean of Culture and University Extension (*Comissão de Cultura e Extensão*) was created in 1991 with the objective of fostering community-university engagement through research and outreach. This office has the directive to organize, strengthen and regulate community-oriented activities within all faculties. Under this office the *Technological Incubator for Popular Enterprises* (ITCP-USP) was created in 1998, with the mandate to promote a solidarity economy. ITCP encourages and supports community enterprises such as food production, clothing and tailoring, urban agriculture, production of cleaning and hygiene products, and data processing. Most of these enterprises are located in the outskirts of the metropolitan region of São Paulo. The methodology of this incubation initiative draws from *Paulo Freire's* popular education pedagogy and from understandings of complementary knowledge creation between local and academic knowledge. Today ITCP is one of forty higher education institutions that form the national network of incubators in Brazil.

Challenges to community based research

A key obstacle in community-based research is the scarce financial and human resources available for this kind of work. Not all higher education funding agencies value community-university partnerships and many do not recognize the respective research outcomes and non-academic modes of disseminating research results. Today funding is insufficient to cover the breadth of themes that need attention and the long-term dedication that is required for building trust between researchers and community members. Projects must be medium to long term in order to implement the actions for social change proposed by community participants. This funding dilemma is addressed through new university partnerships with local governments. However, the number of projects funded by local government agencies is still small and they remain more the exception than the norm (Costa, 2013).

Most examples of community outreach and community-based research activities at USP have been initiated by professors and students whose research agendas are participatory in nature and who aim at social inclusion and community benefit. Some professors incorporate community perspectives into the curriculum and supervise students who work in community settings with marginalised and vulnerable populations.

Courses offered for experiential learning

In some cases, community-based research has become part of the academic curriculum. One example stems from the Department of Mathematics, where students develop prototypes for disabled people as part of their coursework (IME/ USP). Elsewhere, as part of their curriculum students in the Faculty of Education often complete a their work placements in public elementary schools which primarily serve students from low income families. As a result, mutual learning experiences between public schools and the university have emerged.

The experiences of community-university learning are manifold at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism. There are several working groups that have created new courses that facilitate relations between students and employees, with the ultimate goal of facilitating community work. The research commission at this faculty explicitly mentions the commitment to projects that involve community. The research program at FAU provides technical assistance to organized communities, in particular, through supporting their initiative for self-management, social interest housing, and other participatory projects in urban development. Examples include a project to integrate bicycling paths, the *Life park* project which supports community efforts to expand public spaces, participatory projects fostering a cooperative approach to selective household waste collection and separation, and finally a project to develop social and environmental sustainability in a recycling triage centre. The faculty has also created the Centre for Experimental Building (*Canteiro Experimental da FAU USP*), which works with community to promote appropriate construction methods.

Community-university partnerships at USP

The Faculty of Education at USP has several community-university partnerships, many concerned with environmental sustainability and public health. For example, a thematic community-university project between the Faculty of Education and two impoverished municipalities in the western part of the state of São Paulo has resulted in the production of the book called *Environmental Research: Construction of a participatory process of education and changes*. This research was built in partnership with several units at USP (FEUSP, Public Health, *Escola Superior de Agricultura Luiz Queiroz-ESALQ*), the *Instituto Agrônômico in Campinas*, as well as, the municipalities of Espírito Santo do Turvo and Vera Cruz. One of the goals of that project was to increase the income of disadvantaged and impoverished groups.

Another initiative from the Faculty of Education is to train teachers from public elementary schools in environmental studies methodology. The project also established youth and adult education programs in Guarulhos city. A similar project with the Federal University of Rondônia (UNITE) was conducted to recover the memory of the schooling program in the Amazon rainforest-RO called “The ideal, the poetic, the history, the real”.

Participatory sustainable waste management project

The collaboration between the Faculty of Education at the University of São Paulo and the Department of Geography at the University of Victoria, Canada, was started in 2007, in cooperation with groups of organized recyclers, local governments and NGO representatives. The project aimed at strengthening recycling cooperatives and their operations in six municipalities within the metropolitan region of São Paulo, in Brazil. This research collaboration was funded primarily by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) between 2005 and 2012.

The objectives of this project were to improve the organization of informal recyclers and strengthen their networking capabilities; to empower the recyclers to improve safety while handling recyclable materials; to promote the integration of the recycling cooperatives with the collective commercialization of their recyclable materials; to promote inclusive and supportive public policies on solid waste management; and finally, to promote social and environmental sustainability in cities.

A significant difference of this project from many other university community collaborations is the deliberative project management structure. A management council composed of various representatives from universities, recycling co-ops and local government (see Figure 5.2) was in charge of the project. This council met three to four times a year to discuss strategies and evaluate outcomes. Continuous reflection on outcomes, barriers and assets revealed an unforeseen contribution to the capacity development of all participants.

Informed by a critical interdisciplinary literature, the methodology applied in this project was primarily participatory and often action oriented (Brandão, 1987; Thiollent, 2008). During the project design all participants agreed that the mandate should emphasize awareness building processes reminiscent of Freire's (1970) *conscientização*, and that the major beneficiaries of this project should be the organized recyclers.

The structure of the Management Committee was fundamental to knowledge democratization and the collective creation of new knowledge, principles that have been discussed elsewhere by Cahill (2007) and Hall (2005). In this case, research was combined with capacity-building strategies designed to overcome

"The everyday practice and immersed knowledge of the political dimension of these groups of cooperative members and supporters/researchers consolidated a commitment towards promoting empowerment, autonomy and the ability to overcome the oppression of the hegemonic power so present in capitalist modes of production. Respect for the knowledge of the participants, the co-construction of new knowledge and its systematization for collective ownership were fundamental principles in our methodology"

(Gutberlet et al, 2013 p. 4612).

knowledge gaps and deconstruct power relations. The use of interactive, participatory methods of documenting the ideas and perspectives of the participants made these meetings a rich learning experience.

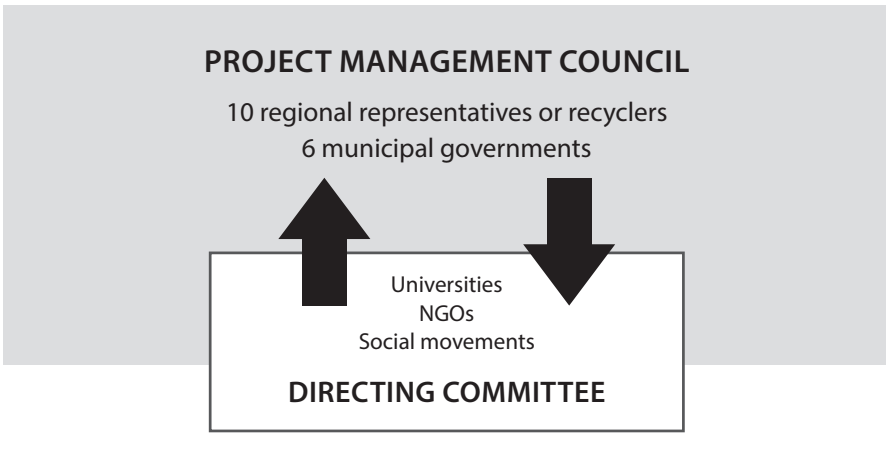


Figure 5.2 PSWM project management council

The ideas for action and sub-projects developed by the Management Committee were implemented by the Directing Committee (DC), a diverse group composed of three university professors, two leaders from the co-op recycling initiative, two representatives from civil society organizations and a fluctuating number of graduate students from diverse backgrounds. Three of these participants were also field coordinators, responsible for maintaining close contact with participants and stakeholders.

New interdisciplinary knowledge was collectively generated during these gatherings and during the various activities carried out by the project members. The discussions, reflections, and actions of the Management Committee were concerned with solid waste policy and management issues, including participatory management, social inclusion, gender issues, collective commercialization, and microcredit. Participatory video, photo-voice and other arts-based research tools were used to capture perspectives on participatory sustainable waste management. Many different readings and imaginations of the world became apparent during the Management Committee meetings and workshops and were analyzed to help develop actions and interventions. Interactive activities facilitated by members of the Directing Committee or by specific professionals, helped articulate the circumstances and challenges of recyclers and other members. The focus and research objectives were always defined with the knowledge and collective approval of all Management Committee participants.

Results of the PSWM social intervention project included:

- 1) the creation of a strong network of recycling cooperatives and the formation a second cooperative with focus on collective commercialization;
- 2) the establishment of dialogue between local governments and recycling cooperatives concerning the participation of coops in solid waste management activities;
- 3) improvement of the organization of recycling operations, from collection and separation to commercialization;
- 4) co-creation and dissemination of educational material;
- 5) development of autonomy and self-management of the cooperatives;
- 6) training for participants on project management, business administration, computer literacy, material composition and conflict resolution; and
- 7) production of theses and academic articles as well as videos, photographic essays, and other educational materials.

The PSWM project was one of several university-community initiatives implemented at the University of São Paulo. It is an example of how knowledge can be generated based on inclusion, participation and deliberation. The project generated learning outcomes that demonstrate the potential of transformation amongst the participants. The recyclers developed their skills and recognition as environmental stewards and educators and also created new opportunities for social and economic inclusion.

Discussion

These examples from USP of experiential curriculum and collaborative research and action demonstrate that there is a small yet viable window for non-conventional university-community partnerships. We feel that if specific supportive policies and infrastructures for university and funding agencies are developed, progress can be made to expand these pluralistic and heterodox means of addressing critical social and environmental concerns.

HEI Case Study 2: The Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)

The Federal University of Rio de Janeiro is the largest federal university of Brazil, offering 156 undergraduate programs in all areas, 94 master's programs, 75 doctorate programs, 112 extension projects and 315 graduate courses. UFRJ has also established partnerships with many national enterprises, some of which have facilities on the UFRJ campuses (i.e., Petrobrás). Moreover, the Science Park of Rio de Janeiro is in Cidade Universitária, which stimulates a close exchange of knowledge between students, professors and civil society.

The university will:

- *contribute to the formation of the student, the qualification of teachers and technicians and exchange with society;*
- *ensure the bidirectional relationship between the university and society, so that pressing social problems receive attention from the university;*
- *prioritize practices for the care of emerging social needs, such as those related to the areas of education, health, housing, food production, job creation and increased income;*
- *include environmental education and sustainable development as part of the extension activity;*

(Selections from Article 3A of the UFRJ extension plan)

The university's Dean of Extension office, which reports to the VP of academic affairs, develops policies, evaluates programs, and provides funding for civic engagement initiatives in the university.

Partnering with Civil Society

The Graduate Faculty of Engineering (COPPE) at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) is one of the largest centers for engineering research and education in Brazil, and is a pioneer in bringing together university and society. In 1970, COPPE established the Coppetec Foundation to manage its partnerships and projects. Since then, it has administered more than 12,000 contracts and partnerships with national and international, private and state-owned companies and governmental and non-governmental agencies. Presently, the foundation manages approximately 1,300 active projects.

The institution has applied engineering and technology to the fight against poverty and inequality, serving as a bridge between Brazil's privileged and under-privileged classes. COPPE founded the Technological Incubator of Popular Cooperatives (ITCP) in 1995, with the goal of creating collective solutions to the problems of economic exclusion and unemployment and to foster development allied to social justice. The incubator supports the creation of popular cooperatives, particularly those initiated by disadvantaged people, and women.

Since its founding, the UFRJ/ITCP has incubated 125 cooperatives (Leca et al., 2014), and has become a model for other states and countries. The ITCP, with funds from FINEP and Fundação Banco do Brasil, started a national network for Incubators of Popular Cooperatives, known as PRONINC (*Programa Nacional de Incubadoras Tecnológicas de Cooperativas Populares*). Currently the network includes 42 ITCPs throughout Brazil (De Oliveira Atrualpa, 2012). The ITCP model has stimulated internal change and transformational knowledge for the universities (Guimarães, 2002). Projects undertaken directly by the ITCP, in partnership with government agencies, have resulted in the creation of official national programs throughout the country.

In 2011, COPPE and the national social network, Committee of Entities Against Hunger and for Life (COEP), inaugurated the Herbert de Souza

Laboratory for Technology and Citizenship. The Laboratory aims to promote sustainable communities by using technical innovation to strengthen collective assets. It also aims to enhance the participation of public universities in community development projects that seek to elevate the quality of life in low-income communities.

Another project is the incubation program of cooperatives and community organizations in areas with high tourist potential, which has been incorporated into the policies of the Ministries of Labour and Tourism. It began in the Northeast, covering the Lençóis Maranhenses in Maranhão; the Parque Nacional da Serra da Capivara and Parnaíba Delta in Piauí, and the Jericoacoara beach in Ceará. Here, local tourist industries only use the local population as workers in hotels and restaurants, while small service providers, like taxi drivers and beach buggy drivers, remain in the informal economy and have no input with the agencies that send tourists to the region. The aim is to transform the tourism industry with programs that encourage the use of cooperatives to formalize and enhance local employment.

The ITCP is also helping to bring the waste recyclers in Brazilian cities out of exclusion by encouraging them to organize themselves into cooperatives. These people are given training in safety and logistics, as well as in the market values of different materials so they can sell them.

In summary, the case of the ITCPs reveals the central role that academics and educational institutions can play in the development of worker cooperatives

COMMUNITIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Communities and Civil Society Case Study 1: The Committee of Entities in the Struggle Against Hunger and for a Full Life (COEP)

COEP is a national social mobilization network established in Rio de Janeiro in 1993 to mobilize institutional and public action in support of the popular movement against hunger and poverty. The network's membership now includes more than 1000 member organizations including public enterprises, non-government organizations, private-sector firms, and government departments. COEP was created by a small group of activists led by sociologist Herbert de Souza, known as 'Betinho'. Together with Luis Pinguelli Rosa of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and André Spitz of Furnas, the electricity utility, Betinho invited the presidents of the major public entities to discuss their integration into the 'Struggle against Hunger and Misery'. Soon over 30 enterprises, representing sectors such as banking, energy, telecommunications, health, agriculture and education, declared their membership.

Each year COEP focuses on a specific theme for social development at a national level, aiming for collective impact at the community level throughout Brazil. Currently, major themes throughout the networks are climate change and poverty. An agenda concerned with both preventing and addressing the effects of climate

change has been constructed, with the intention of informing dialogue and public policy as well as implementing specific initiatives (Gutberlet & Tremblay, 2014).

The network is active in all 27 states. By mid 2008 there were also several municipal networks with functions similar to their national and state counterparts. These networks enabled COEP to engage with communities and brought it closer to the local realities of poverty in Brazil, thus allowing it to support community development initiatives with local presence, knowledge, and credibility. COEP's affiliates include a network of individuals (with more than 32,000 members) and a network of well over a hundred "COEP communities" throughout Brazil. COEP encourages its members to support and participate in development projects that combat poverty (Saxby, 2004). Its aim is to foster responsible citizenship both within the participating organizations themselves and within communities. It challenges public entities to break with narrowly sectoral and competitive logic, to cooperate with each other and with other organizations, and to become truly public bodies by grappling with paramount social issues (Schnell & Saxby, 2010).

An example of COEP's work is the 'University Citizens' Project, which promotes the participation of public universities in the implementation of community development projects in low-income communities. Developed in the Northeast, there is now one university in each state involved with community capacity building. This project has had a significant impact on the organizational development of community organizations throughout Brazil (F. André Spitz, Interview, January 5th, 2015).

Organizational structure – A national 'hybrid'

COEP is a voluntary nationwide network with many characteristics of a civil society organization, but which operates in the border area between the state, the parastatal sector, private business and civil society. Through its national and state-level networks, COEP has conducted vigorous campaigns to mobilize institutions and the public to support the fight against poverty, and to encourage 'active citizenship' (Saxby, 2004). Through its campaigns and development projects, COEP promotes cooperation and partnerships among its affiliates, who have committed substantial resources to social responsibility and action.

As membership grew from the mid 1990's, COEP's Deliberative Council encouraged the formation of state and municipal level networks. This decentralization enabled more effective responses to regional realities, particularly those related to poverty. Since 1998, COEP has had a designated secretariat, the *Oficina Social* (Social Workshop), which is based in the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and financed by 18 national entities. The *Oficina* maintains a database of projects, publicly accessible on COEP's website. In addition to several documents, COEP has produced more than 30 videos about COEP's work.

Financial mechanisms

COEP has been sustained by major financial and in-kind contributions from its affiliates. Public entities, such as banks, have opened branches in poor communities and established microcredit and financial management schemes for street vendors. Although public entities are no longer the sole members of COEP, they remain important. COEP “has succeeded by adopting a non-hierarchical, yet structured, organizational configuration that leaves room for members’ initiative, while at the same time maintains internal consistency and integrity” (Schnell & Saxby, 2010, p.2). In addition to substantial financial and physical resources these public entities provide national reach, since their subsidiary structures extend nation wide. The largest energy producer in Brazil, Furnas, has committed significant leadership in the secretariat function and other roles. Other companies, such as Banco do Brasil, have been active in the *Ação Cidadania*, with over 2000 branch committees participating. According to André Spitz, Executive Secretary between 1993 and 2003, COEP sought to engage the wealthier and more powerful sectors of society in the campaign against hunger:

It was founded as a committee to mobilize people and organizations, and to challenge the culture of indifference. Public enterprises could not be islands of excellence building walls to keep out the surrounding social reality. Poverty was a problem for everyone, and ending it would require a concerted national effort. With their invitation to the entities, COEP’s founders were challenging them to change their culture and methods as well - to break with narrow sectoral and competitive logic, to cooperate with each other and with other organizations, and to become truly public bodies. (Saxby, 2004, p. 3).

Social impacts through partnerships

COEP has promoted the scaling-up and replication of successful community-level projects through partnerships. An example of this kind of partnership is Cootram—Cooperative of Self-Employed Workers in the Manguinhos Complex—a poor favela in Rio de Janeiro. Using COEP as a forum for communication, Fiocruz, a public health institution under the Ministry of Health, mobilized a number of organizations, including universities, banks and the private sector, to develop a pilot project for the creation of a popular cooperative. These organizations contributed according to their specific capabilities: COPPE, the Graduate School of Research and Engineering from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, provided professors and students for training; Finep, the Brazilian Innovation Agency, and the Foundation of the Bank of Brazil offered financial support; and the Bank of Brazil also contributed its experience with supporting cooperatives. The project was replicated in another six universities throughout the country and resulted in the creation of the National Program of Popular Cooperative Incubators (PRONINC) (Gutberlet, Tremblay & Moraes, 2014). This program has been one of COEPs

most visible achievements and has been taken up as government policy through the *Programa Comunidade Solidaria*, resulting in ‘cooperative incubators’ around the country (Schnell & Saxby, 2010).

COEP also used technology to mobilize people and promote active citizenship. Examples include project databases for mobilization, COEP TV, media and information systems.

International networks

In 2012, COEP, the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and the Centre for Community Innovation (3ci) at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, formed the Better Futures Network, an international network among universities and research organizations active in community development, and the communities they work with. The network disseminates knowledge about policies, models and cases produced through research partnerships and social innovation. Some of the goals of these research and social innovation projects have been to promote full citizenship rights and better employment opportunities, address climate change, increase access to affordable food and water, reduce violence against women, and build youth leadership capacity.

Communities and Civil Society Case Study 2: Center for the Study and Promotion of Agriculture Group (CEPAGRO)

The Center for the Study and Promotion of Agriculture Group (CEPAGRO) was founded in 1990 by a group of farmers and technicians interested in promoting collective agriculture as a way of making small rural properties feasible. Throughout its 24 years of existence, and through critical reflection, CEPAGRO has established various projects, partnerships and agreements in the state of Santa Catarina in southern Brazil. The aim of the organization is to encourage rural and urban communities to work together using the principles of agro-ecology.

CEPAGRO is a bridging organization that links and integrates the university/academic space with community management. It promotes the idea of development through a series of community processes (as proposed by Furtado, 2009) that channel social forces to generate new, more dignified living conditions for lower income communities. The institution takes a Freirian perspective (see Freire, 1970) which suggests that transformation in the community and in the organization itself can be accomplished through a process of *praxis*. The objective of the projects is to establish new standards of understanding food production, managing waste and selling local products. In 1996, the organization was recognized as a Public Utility Entity by the Government of the State of Santa Catarina, with Law no. 10.212/96, and by the Municipality of Florianópolis, with Law 4846/96.

Networks, structures, projects and relations with HEIs.

In networks that promote CBR, especially for facilitating engagement of civil society with HEIs, the projects are drawn up with the communities and have public and private supporters, both national and international. The work is sustained by projects in which the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) is a partner in the activities and works with the direct involvement of teachers and students.

The governance of CEPAGRO is shared by a group of eight people, including educators, agronomists and technicians. Some members are former university students who participated in previous CEPAGRO projects. Although there is support from University Professors through in-kind participation in meetings and community actions, it is CEPAGRO that makes the decisions.

The governance of specific projects is the responsibility of each one of the different CEPAGRO teams with the community. In order to promote an autonomous process of local leadership, the community partners have a central role in deciding project actions as well as the financial destination of some resources. During the project all members participate in decision-making.

CEPAGRO provides the physical space, work structure and guidance for interns, scholarship holders, researchers, graduate and post graduate students who participate in collaborative projects. Cooperation with the university is performed through university extension, enabling students with different interests to establish practical and theoretical insights into collective practices, production and organization in rural and urban settings. This cooperation also gives rise to such deep learning that some students involved in this work move on to formal employment in CEPAGRO.

The following are some examples of the work of CEPAGRO and its relationship with the UFSC:

- Participation of agronomy students in the Urban Agricultural Project in partnership with City Halls, municipal schools of Florianópolis, needy communities and community associations
- Participation of students in field activities conducted under CEPAGRO Projects financed by the Brazilian Ministry of Agrarian Development
- Lectures on themes such as Agro-ecology, group agriculture and Eco-life Network for courses in Agronomy, Geography, Economy, Social Sciences, Nutrition, Administration, Design, Arts, History and Student housing—demands from teachers and students, approximately 300
- Developing student internships in other CEPAGRO partner organizations, through agreements signed with UFSC
- Providing professional training for students who became agronomists while working at CEPAGRO

- Organization, supervision and support of course internships and national and international exchanges for graduate and post graduate students at universities (UFSC, UDESC and UNISUL)
- Partnership with the *Projeto Família Casca da UFSC*, for environmental education
- Participation by CEPAGRO Technical Team on TCC panels.

Some examples of the studies and themes include:

- A partnership between the Nucleus for Environment and Development at UFSC and CEPAGRO, conciliating territorial development with agro-ecological practice
- Exchange trips with the ethnological museum between Guarani villages along the Santa Catarina coast, encouraging the exchange of seeds and re-introducing native species of flora and fauna
- Compiling a list of small landowners/farmers linked to the Nucleus of the Santa Catarina Coastal Region that could take students for extra-curricular and curricular internships that develop activities linked to agro-ecological production, product processing, sales and agro-tourism
- Firming agreement with Foundations of Research for the effective delivery of the Voisin Grazing system aimed at producing pasture based livestock
- Participation by CEPAGRO Technical Team on end of course panels
- Partnership with departments and teachers, with the two extension programs for 2007: Ecological and Solidarity Initiative Networks in Rural and Urban Communities in Santa Catarina, and Institutional Strengthening of the Rio Cachoeira do Norte Microcatchment Association, municipality of Palhoça, south central coast of the state of Santa Catarina with the Center of Philosophy and Human Sciences/Geography
- On establishing partnership with UFSC, the Fifth Regional Meeting of Farmers from the Agro-ecology Eco-life Network was held at the Center for Agrarian Sciences. More than 80 people, from ten municipalities from the Coastal and High Valley regions of the State of Santa Catarina, attended the event.

CEPAGRO plays a key role in the process of creating, promoting and ensuring engagement opportunities at the national and the provincial level. With the formulation of public policies, the organization acts in different public spaces including: Pronaf State Council, State Commission for Organic Production, State Council for Rural Development, member of Ecumenical Center for Support to Development-CEADes, State and Regional Forum of Economic Solidarity, State Committee of Alternatives for Cultivation of Tabaco/DFMDA, Monte Cristo Network, and the Coordination of Eco-life Network. In these deliberative spaces, there is dialogue

between different public and social spheres, encouraging the creation and implementation of public policies focused on the interest of family farmers and urban communities thus reinforcing the relationship between micro and macro spheres. Through identifying significant institutional agents and through interactions with decision-makers, the communities take part in the decision-making process.

To facilitate engagement by way of their interventions, CEPAGRO projects are drawn up with the community according to its needs and context. This allows individuals and groups to be actors of development, and to negotiate individual and collective interests. The projects are sustained through the autonomy of communities that when organized effectively manage their own development.

Monitoring community vegetable gardens in two municipalities in Santa Catarina

There are structures in place to facilitate the engagement between university and CEPAGRO. The research is conducted directly with residents from less privileged areas, fostering and giving value to the practices of composting, communal vegetable gardens, school and domestic gardens for helping pedagogic projects in environmental education. This process is linked to local socio-cultural characteristics and to the strategies of biodiversity management, and encourages lower dependence on external supplies, and collective social/action learning for the adaptation and transformation of adversities (see Figure 5.3).

Some projects of CEPAGRO:

- *certification and the sale of agro-ecological products*
- *preservation and maintenance of agro-food assets*
- *education programs on the didactics of growing good food*
- *urban agriculture and community management of organic waste through composting*
- *ecological management and environmental education*
- *technical assistance and rural extension for tobacco growers aimed at agro-ecological transition.*

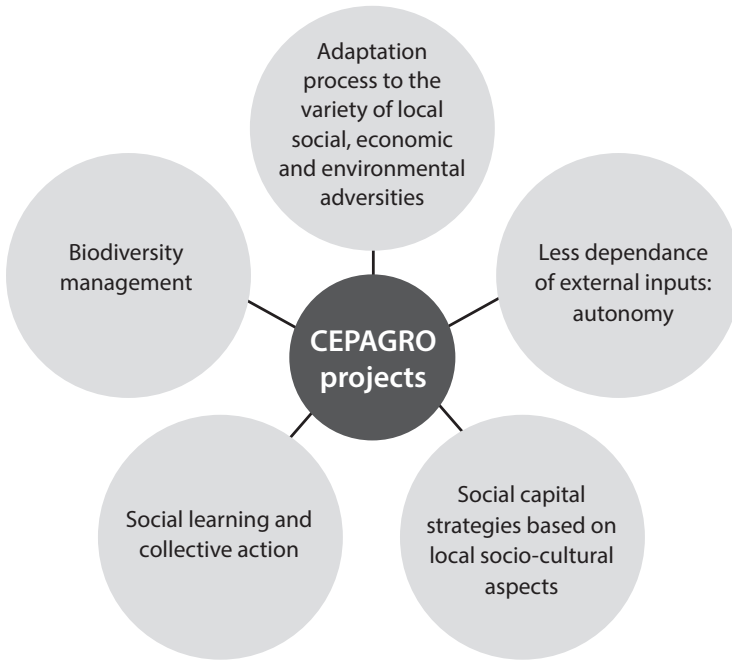


Figure 5.3 Decision-making mechanisms in CEPAGRO projects

Participatory methodologies are usually used for research design and leadership development. For example, community members design different elements of operation with schools, churches, health centers, leadership associations, community centers, and other organizations. Furthermore, the community engages in dialogue with public and legislative management in public councils and forums.

Funding is one of the main challenges for CEPAGRO. There are several mechanisms for funding CEPAGRO projects. Government agencies, such as the Ministry of Rural Development, for example, support part of the costs for social projects. Furthermore, the organization receives financial support from the Pro-extension Department. Others challenges are insecurity and instability of guaranteed work for the work team and an increase in government control measures on NGO activities in Brazil with high taxes on the projects' activities.

Final Considerations

The culture of civic engagement in Brazil is rich and extensive, and reflects the institutional structures of its universities, social networks and organizations. Extension and service to society are seen as necessary components of student learning, the creation of new knowledge as well an appropriate response to societal needs. The emergence of the National Forum of Extension made up of Vice-

Chancellors of Brazilian Public Universities in 1987 was a landmark in the future of university-community collaborations. This forum put extension in a prominent position into Brazilian public universities, and enforced the universities' tripartite mission—teaching, research, and extension.

Although the 'incubator' model is not new, what makes it unique to civic engagement in Brazil is its innovative approach. Local needs and attempts to alleviate poverty have shaped the emergence of different incubation models. Many were intentionally established as a remedy to unemployment, aiming solely at job creation especially in traditional sectors, such as agricultural equipment and the textile sector (Akcomak, 2009). Other incubators have since specialized to foster entrepreneurship in cultural activities, such as music, art, and cinema industry (Scaramuzzi, 2002).

The incubator of popular cooperatives has generated positive outcomes in employment and income. Additional benefits have been the qualification of people in the communities, increased capacity of the cooperatives, and university knowledge exchange with communities.

The incubator of popular cooperatives has generated positive outcomes in employment and income. In addition, community members have had the opportunity to improve their skills and qualifications, and the general morale of the cooperative has increased. Finally, opportunities for knowledge exchange between university and community have greatly expanded.

This and other practical experiences like those of COEP, CEPAGRO, and the PSWM project demonstrate the contributions universities are able to make towards transformative social learning. These case studies illustrate some of the specific social action learning approaches HEIs can use when working in collaboration with cooperatives, community initiatives and social movements. Further, they highlight the important bridging function of HEIs, through collaborative learning, in the emancipatory struggles of these grassroots initiatives.

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