

Chapter 4

Transforming Crises into Opportunities to Generate Sustainable Business in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

Meeting the sustainable development complex requirements in a scenario, which involves multiple social actors, relationships, contexts, and interests, has demanded new business models. Thus, this chapter discusses how one of the largest companies in Latin America's chemical segment formed a network with 23 social actors and has built a Corporate Social Entrepreneurship model to deal with the dialectic between return on investments for its shareholders and benefits for its stakeholders. Research was conducted based on Boje's narrative analysis. The data was built through interviews, informal conversations, textual and audiovisual documents, and non-participant observation. The chapter describes the Corporate Social Entrepreneurship model's elements and in this manner contributes to the discussion of the role of Academia, Industry, and Government in entrepreneurship.

INTRODUCTION

Meeting the sustainable development complex requirements in a scenario, which involves multiple issues (economic, environmental, social, political, cultural and geographic dimensions; several social actors, conflicts of interests, contexts, interrela-

tions, partnerships, and power relationships), has demanded new business models. Therefore, actors such as the Academia, Industry and Government along with its collaborative networks are striving to develop news ways to find viable solutions for complex social and environmental problems.

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Several approaches, such as the social learning for sustainability in organizations have contributed to the resolution of these issues (D'Angelo & Brunstein, 2014). Corporate Social Entrepreneurship is another approach that can help understand how organizations not only support a problem resolution but also take advantage of such situations to lever its business and generate a societal change (Austin, Leonard, Reficco, & Wei-Skillern, 2006).

Corporate Social Entrepreneurship is a concept, which has emerged from other conceptual frameworks – entrepreneurship, corporate entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship – to address societal issues, based on collaboration and partnerships by creating social and economic value (Reficco & Austin, 2009). However, this concept is still emerging as an area for academic inquiry with a few studies on this field (Hemingway, 2005; Kuratko, Hornsby, & McMullen, 2011; Wickert & Schaefer, 2011; Spitzeck, Boechat, & Leão, 2013) and its theoretical underpinnings has not been adequately explored, and needs more contributions to theory and practice.

Thus, this chapter will present a case study to discuss and analyse how a large organization – The Chemical Company – and its network of multiple social actors are engaged in a sustainable business web and building up a Corporate Social Entrepreneurship model in the town of Bebedouro, in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. This town is part of one of the most developed agriculture business regions in Brazil.¹

It is about a case which has started 30 years ago, involving around 20 cities in states of São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina and Mato Grosso; 122 agriculture properties; 43.000 hectares diagnosed; more than 70,000 people reached by environmental and education actions; 29 million students benefited by Theatre actions; 7.013 children on ecological trail; 35.000 students beneficiated by Environmental Atlas Book; and 300 teachers qualified (Foundation, 2011; The Chemical Company, 2013).

By the end of this chapter, we hope to contribute to address the issue about the role of Academia, Industry and Government collaborative networks in entrepreneurship, as well as, the role of the Government in Academia – Industry – Government (state or municipal) networks.

BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Development's Principles Operationalization by Organizations

The dynamics of the contemporary development process will be more or less sustainable as a function of the combination of human life different dimensions, such as economic, sociological, politic, cultural, technological, environmental etc., well grounded in distinct fields, but complementary: competitiveness, sustainability and flexibility (Becker, 2002).

Competitiveness is a result of the transformation process due to the economic globalization process, led by large corporations, whose objectives also become nation, regions, other organizations and institutions' objectives. Sustainability is the other side of competitiveness, giving it an organic character. In other words, each reality – local, region or nation – needs a different dialog and resources to get inserted in such transformational process. Finally, flexibility unfolds in participation, partnerships, networks, chains, consortiums, alliances, integration, common markets, and so on. It a way to approach groups, organizations, regions and nations to deal with common interests, including partnerships between competitor firms and nations (Becker, 2002).

These authors understand that the development process should take into account the society's political, economic, social, structure and organization conditions. And this is possible due to the technological progress, which strengthened the humankind's analytical capacity to work with the

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