

Chapter 12

The Performativity of a Cop in Innovation Context: The Case of a Brazilian Cluster

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to explore opportunities, challenges and problems of community of practice (CoP) in rising economies. This subject is explored through the case study of the performance of a CoP of entrepreneurs of startup from the Belo Horizonte ICT's cluster of innovation, Brazil. Our objective is to confront this informal organization to the normative orientation of cluster in which they can emerge in an innovation context and pursue its performance. The analysis of the development of this CoP, from its creation to nowadays, shows how the CoP quickly becomes the leverage of a regional innovation dynamism. Findings show also the performance behavior of the CoP facing the normative pressure from the innovation cluster created in that region.

INNOVATING IN BRAZIL THROUGH CLUSTERING POLICY¹

The historical evolution of the innovation in Brazil is illustrated by dichotomous relationships between the State and the market. Until the end of 1990's the innovation policy was rejected by the Federal Government in Brazil. This policy returned to the consideration of the federal government in 1999, when the Ministry of Science and Technology was structured. In this year was created the Directorial Funds (*Fundos Setoriais, in Portuguese*) that aims the finance the production sector and the institutions of science and technology.

According to Koeller and Gordon (2013) the System of Innovation in Brazil is based on a broad definition of National System of Innovation, in accordance to the concepts proposed by Freeman and

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Lundvall (1988). The fundamental assumption of such definitions is the systemic and nonlinear vision of the process by the participating of all agents of innovation process, being not restricted to enterprises and the scientific or technological structure.

The key features of the Brazilian innovation system are its structural heterogeneity, which are also reflected in the outstanding regional disparities (Koeller & Gordon, 2013). Besides the outstanding social inequalities, the Survey of Innovation conducted by IBGE (2011) shows a strong concentration of income and of the production structure in the Southern and Southeastern regions of the country and, furthermore, there is a lack of connection between the innovation policy and the development and education policies at all levels. As a result of this the Brazilian innovation system loose opportunities for the evolution and development.

Therefore, the analysis of innovation policy in Brazil must consider the context of underdevelopment, with the disproportionate in its productive, social and regional structures. With the creation of the Sectorial Funds, started the process for formulating the National Policy for Science, Technology and Innovation, also with participation of the Ministry of Science and Technology. At the end of 2003, the federal government also launched the Industrial, Technological and Foreign Trade Policy (PITCE - *Política Industrial, Tecnológica e de Comércio Exterior*) with the aim to set priority areas (Koeller & Gordon, 2013; Pacheco, 2006; Pereira, 2005)

With the aim of reducing sectorial and geographical disparities, the Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade – (MDIC) plays a key role in the implementation of policies related to industry, services, innovation, and foreign trade. MDIC is a channel for dialogue between the government and private sector representatives through the so-called Sectorial Competitiveness Councils. Some of MDIC's main policy areas are:

- The Program for Incentive to Innovation in the Enterprise (*Programa de Incentivo à Inovação nas Empresas Brasileiras – PIPE, in Portuguese*). According to MDIC the major objective of this program is to provide Brazilian entrepreneurs with an online service for reference regarding the search for solution of difficulties related to the development of technological innovations. This program is linked to the Department of Innovation (*Secretaria da Inovação – SI*) belonging to MDIC which aims to promote innovation in Brazilian companies by presenting mechanisms to support the development, dissemination of innovation culture as well as the development of innovation policies, which guarantee competitiveness to industry products and service;
- And from the early 2000s, the concept of Local Productive Arrangements (LPA) (*Arranjos Produtivos Locais – APLs, in Portuguese*) was spread by researchers associated to the Research Network on Local Productive and Innovative Systems (RedeSist²) and fostered by the Brazilian System of Innovation. According to the Ministry, it has the objective of “guiding and coordinating the governmental efforts in the induction of local development, looking for, accordingly to the government’s strategic guidelines, the generation of employment and income and the stimulus to exports”. This program is coordinated by the MDIC through the Department of Industrial Competitiveness (*Secretaria do Desenvolvimento da Produção, in Portuguese*) which accounts for 10 goals of the Annual Plan (*Plano Plurianual – PPA, in Portuguese*), with predominant role in the initiatives and goals of the Thematic Program 2055 - Production Development. This program is configured as the main instrument to support the implementation of actions for the development of productive chains.

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