

Chapter 111

Cross–Sector Collaboration between Business and Non–Business Actors: The Case of an ICT–Project in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to the project management literature by introducing behavioural aspects of relationships in collaborative ICT projects. Specifically, it examines the role played by business and non-business actors in successful projects regarding urban mobility in emerging economies. To accomplish this, a case study was undertaken, based on the development of a solution for public transportation in the South of Brazil. The findings suggest that, besides technological know-how, the interplay between commitment, knowledge, and opportunity development seem to have a combined impact on project outcome. The result strengthens the idea that studies analysing project management should consider not only rational dimensions of the projects, such as cost, time, quality, and scope, but also the social dimension in terms of the relationships that partners develop during and after the project.

INTRODUCTION

Innovative projects in urban mobility are crucial for fostering countries' sustainable development and citizens' well-being, not the least in emerging economies. Urban mobility has been frequently followed by traffic congestion, air pollution and increased consumption of energy and it represents a big challenge for local governments to solve. In times when mobility is declining rapidly in most of the developing world, projects involving cross-sector collaboration- i.e. collaboration across government, non-profit and

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business - have been acknowledged as alternatives for finding new solutions, as such complex issues cannot be solved by one single entity (Powell et al., 1996).

There are some important forces encouraging cross-sector collaborations: from the non-profit side, government support of philanthropy has reduced worldwide, so in order to survive non-profit organizations have been forced to generate revenue by means of commercial activities. Besides that, non-profit has moved from being combative to more collaborative. From the perspective of the government, privatization transferred government ownership of a business from the public sector to the private sector and partially to the non-profit sector, making government rely more on business and civil society to provide public goods and services (Ashman, 2000). From the business viewpoint, firms have been more exposed to broader and global stakeholders than previously, encouraging them to a more corporate responsibility on a variety of issues (Waddock & Smith, 2000). Firms, for example, have also changed their corporate behaviour to engage more in social and environmental issues in areas where NGOs (non-governmental organizations) have more knowledge and legitimacy. All these aspects have favoured a closer dialogue among actors with the various sectors in society in the development of innovative solutions.

There is a large body of research on the impact of a diversity of partners on innovation (e.g. Callon, 1998; Håkansson & Lundgren, 1995; Nelson & Winter, 1982; Nooteboom et al., 2007), not the least represented by the research on inter-organizational projects (see e.g. Morris, 2009). There is also some, if not much, research on the impact on innovation of the inclusion of non-business actors such as governmental bodies or NGOs in projects (Håkansson & Waluszewski, 2007). However, despite the recognition of the impact of non-business actors on innovation, few researchers have combined the study of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) with a focus on inter-organizational aspects including non-business actors, especially in emerging economies where such collaborations have been stated to be of great importance for the success of the project (Zhou, 2006). It is worth emphasizing that developing cross-sector collaborations is important in these markets to overcome the barriers caused by a lack of strong political institutions supporting business (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010). This phenomenon has been called “institutional voids” by Khanna & Palepu (1997, p. 41).

The objective of the present work is to examine the role played by interaction between business and non-business actors in successful ICT-projects for urban mobility in emerging economies. To accomplish this, a qualitative research method is undertaken, using a case study approach to study the development of a solution for public transportation in the south of Brazil. Grounded on project management literature and a business relationship approach, particular attention will be paid to the role played by each actor in the development and implementation of the project, the interaction and interdependency between them as well as the main factors influencing the overall outcome.

The paper proceeds as follows: in the next section we review the literature on project management focusing on behavioural aspects of the business relationships. An analytical model using the theoretical concepts of commitment, knowledge and opportunity development is developed. We then discuss the case study methodology employed and give the reader some background concerning the research setting. After that follows the case study describing the project “The Buses of Brazil: Connectivity – Transport Solution”. We then analyse our findings, before the final section, in which we present the concluding remarks and suggestions for future research direction.

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