

Isomorphism, Resource Dependence and Organizational Performance: an analysis of the Relationships of Brazilian NGOs and International NGOs

Patricia Mendonça*
Edgilson Tavares Araújo**

ABSTRACT

The constant interaction between more rationalized organizational structures and structures less rationalized and rigid, which tend to be more informal are present in the life of many NGOs in Brazil. In general terms, founding organizations, such as government bodies, private foundations, corporations and international donors end up in following more rigid and formal logics. In this sense, the performance discourse appears as needs of many NGOs in rationalize their structure in order to access resources and to gain legitimacy.

The performance discourse is defined here as rational standards of *Weberian* basis, which aims to guarantee legitimacy and the access of resources. Some manifestations of these rational standards on the internal processes and organizational structures are the growing importance of control systems, centralization of power and the option for a fragmented management model focused on project implementation that frequently produce antagonisms among internal sub-units of the organization with the whole organizational identity. Conflicts among rationalization and participative and democratic orientation are likely to appear.

Some questions linked to rationalization, legitimacy and access to resources have been on the scope of scholars working with organizational theory in many fields: how do organizations deal with contradictory pressures from the environment for changes and adaptation and their own inertial forces? Which factors are acting on each of these poles? How do they guide organizational actions?

Regarding non-profit organizations these analysis gain complexity when we observe the ambiguity on their actions, incorporating a growing number of demands from different agents and institutional fields, where multiples forms of power are exerted in a construction of contrasting structures and actions.

This work reflects about these questions using the framework of Resource Dependence Theory and Institutional Theory, considering the interconnection of factors that influence organizational change, being impossible to isolate them. So its points to an approach that consider the relative position of each organization on its environment and the interpretation they realize about this same environment.

We analyzed the Brazilian NGOs, the *Grupo de Apoio a Prevenção a Aids da Bahia –GAPA/BA* (Group of Support and Prevention of HIV) and the *Grupo Brasil de Apoio ao Surdocego e ao Múltiplo Deficiente Sensorial* (Brazilian Support Group of people with multiple disabilities, particularly deafblind), showing the implications of resource dependence on the International NGOs and the interpretation they made about the performance discourse, which produced different strategies on these organizations.

KEY WORDS: Brazilian NGOs, International NGOs, Resource Dependence Theory, Institutional Theory, Organizational Performance

* PhD Candidate at Escola de Administração de São Paulo – Fundação Getúlio Vargas (São Paulo – Brasil)

** Centro Interdisciplinar de Desenvolvimento e Gestão Social/ Universidade Federal da Bahia (CIAGS / UFBA) – Faculdades Jorge Amado (Salvador, Bahia – Brasil)

Innovation at the *Semi-Arido* of Brazil: social capital and government entrepreneurship fostering change

Patrícia Mendonça*

Abstract

The aim of this work is to analyse institutional change (innovations in social policies and governments practices) in the *Semi-Árido* of Brazil. *Semi-Árido* is an inland area of 764.522Km², mostly localized in the Northeast, which encompasses 1,132 municipalities and where approximately 13% of Brazilian population is concentrated. It is distinctive characterized by periods of dryness and water source problems. Despite of its heterogeneity it is possible to mark other characteristics: historical concentration of land, poverty and the worse social indicators of the country, clientelist practices, economy essentially agrarian and population dislocations to the 'rich' Southeast region.

This backwardness was mostly always attributed to the climatic conditions, but one observes that the region has been consistently neglected in having efficient public policies to address its problems. Not surprising, the area has low levels of social capital, complemented by poor organizational capacities in local governments.

How do changes occur at contexts characterized by economic backwardness, low levels of social capital and low levels of governmental capacity? What are the roles of institutions on this process? How do they act to promote the emergency and the strength of networks that will increase social capital and government capacity?

To answer these questions we analysed 63 experiences of innovation from municipalities located at the *Semi-Árido*. We took our sample among more than 17,000 projects received between 1996 and 2005 by the *Programa Gestão Pública and Cidadania*, an initiative of Ford Foundation and Fundação Getúlio Vargas, in São Paulo, Brazil, which annually prizes the 20 best experiences of innovation from local governments and disseminates them in publications and a databank available in the internet (<http://inovando.fgvsp.br/>) We also looked at some municipal indicators from the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics)

Our analysis shows some important points that are present when processes of change begin in the *Semi-Árido*:

- Civil Society networks and the action of local business (basically small companies) seem to have impact on local public management innovations. Do they have any relation to macro-institutional arrangement? More qualitative observation will help to answer it.

- Macro institutional context concerning the focus on strengthening local governments and the decentralization of implementation of social policies might produce contradictory results. In some cases they create a space that encourages change, but they might also perpetuate clientelist and passive relationships from the municipalities towards central government, once most financial resources are still centralized.

KEY WORDS: Half-Arid region of Brazil, Local Government, Social Capital, Innovation, Institutional Change

* PhD Candidate at Escola de Administração de São Paulo – Fundação Getúlio Vargas (São Paulo – Brasil)