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A methodology of network action for local development: The ReINC project's market prospecting case - Rio de Janeiro

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Partnerships and collaboration to accelerate integration in the value chain

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A methodology of network action for local development: The ReINC project's market prospecting case - Rio de Janeiro.

Executive summary:

This article aims to analyze the work potentialities of technological incubation from a network of incubators and taking into account as case study the market prospecting project in the sector of Oil and Gas, carried out in the scope of Incubators, Technological Parks and Poles Network of Rio de Janeiro.

There are two questions that guide this work. Firstly, to inquire how, in a field of advanced technology as Oil & Gas, it was possible the well succeeded insertion of incubated popular enterprises in the production chain, articulating high technology with popular technology basis. Secondly, to analyze how the incubators network managed to carry out a joint project, allowing not only the interaction among incubators with distinct characteristics, but also a rich interaction among enterprise members coming from distinct social background and historically separated.

Keywords: technological incubation, popular enterprises, incubators networks, oil & gas, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Full Paper Text

Introduction¹

This article analyses the potential of the work of technological incubation from the articulation in incubators network and taking as a study of case the Project Values of Supply Networks for the Oil and Gas Industry (Project) conducted under the Incubators, Technological Parks and Poles of Rio de Janeiro Network. (ReINC).

During 2006, the Project articulated incubators of many areas, belonging to ReINC, with the aim to enter the incubated businesses in the productive chain of Rio de Janeiro Oil and Gas sector, recognized for its magnitude and capability. In that sense, have highlighted the insertion and the results achieved by popular businesses in incubation still poorly capitalized and that are characterized for being composed by socially vulnerable people, having low income and lacking of educational resources and access to decision-making spheres.

From this case, it was analyzed two issues considered of equal analytical and policy relevance and clearly articulated between them. First, ask how in a field of advanced technology, such as the Oil and Gas, the success of incubated popular businesses was possible by entering them in this production chain, articulating cutting-edge technology and popular base technology. Secondly, examine how a incubator network has developed a project together, allowing not only the interaction between incubators of different characteristics, but also a rich interaction of members of enterprises belonging to different social groups and historically separated.

It has to analyze, on the one hand, the methodology proposed and practice of the Center for University Entrepreneurship and Consulting (CEU)'s team, responsible for implementing the project. On the other hand, the policy proposed and the concrete and institutional ReINC practices, implemented by incubators managers and the network's technicians, along with the role of the incubation of popular cooperatives promoted by the Technology Incubator of Popular Cooperatives (ITCP) of the Post-graduate and Research Engineering Institute (COPPE) of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ).

The methodology for this study is to analyze the documentation of the entire Project Values of Supply Networks for the Oil and Gas Industry (Project) along with the testimony of his executors, both of the technical team regarding the network and its incubators. For a better understanding of the project's results, the work was made with the concept of network values (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004), which can identify the foundations of the process of articulation popular groups with technology and its results. The point of view of the authors has to do with being protagonists of this experience, belonging to the team of CEU, ReINC and ITCP. A careful review of documentation and accuracy critical to the concepts chosen and their own actions were taken, being a fundamental objective at the time of drafting the present work.

The article begins with a brief presentation of ReINC, CEU and the ITCP and a history on the genesis of the project before its implementation. Later, it will be made a brief description of the project methodology, its way of implementation and its main results. Finally, an

¹ The authors thank the text revision made by Renata Petrocelli (CEU), Gabriella Santoro (ReINC/REDETEC) and Luciano Rocco (ITCP/UFRJ).

analysis will be conducted on the causes and consequences, seeking to highlight the results that can serve as reference for the whole of incubators and their networks.

Brief history of the main actors and prior history of the Project

For the purposes of this study, the analysis is focused on the role of the following three actors in the formulation and development of the Project²: the ReINC and its incubators, the team of CEU and the ITCP. In that sense, it is important to make a brief reference to these actors and then, analysis the program itself.

The ReINC is the meeting of business incubators based in Rio de Janeiro to stimulate the increase of its capacity for action and implementation. Through a joint planning, seeks to develop an intense exchange between incubators, and allow sharing of resources and improvement of its management processes.

Currently, the ReINC has 20 associated incubators, which total 133 businesses incubated and 103 graduates. The participants of the ReINC are: Pole Technology Incubator of Bio-Rio Foundation, Technology Business and the Popular Cooperatives Incubators of COPPE / UFRJ, Technological, Cultural and Social Incubators of PUC-Rio, Business Incubator of the Polytechnic Institute of UERJ, Teleinformatic Companies Incubator of CEFET / RJ, Technological Incubator based in Agribusiness of UFRRJ, Business Incubator of the UFF, the Business Incubator INT, Business Incubator of INMETRO, the Business Incubator SENAC-Rio, the Incubator Center Serrasoft, Popular Cooperatives Incubator of the Prefecture of Macaé, Youth Initiative, Phoenix Business Incubator of the UERJ / RJ, incubator of the Catholic University of Petropolis, Business Incubator of UVA and Army Business Incubator.

Established on September 21, 1998, the ReINC has as main goal to promote the exchange of knowledge on incubators, poles and technology parks, support the development of organizations with these characteristics, existing and that will arise in Rio de Janeiro, besides the stimulus to study, work and related projects, aiming to be recognize as an important articulator of the movement in Rio de Janeiro³.

In 2004, ReINC perceived that was extremely important the instrumental structuring of the incubators, to make possible the implemented of their management models. At that time, the national incubators movement passed by profound transformations, becoming increasingly necessary the implementation of actions that permit the self-sustainability of these organizations, as well as the strengthening of their entrepreneurship installed.

Trying to deal this new context, ReINC saw in the National Plan of Incubators' s Public Call for proposals, 2004,⁴ an opportunity to strengthen businesses incubated in Rio de Janeiro.

²During the developing of the Project it was essential the participation of several incubators belonging to ReINC, especially those who worked in the presentation to the Public Call of the National Plan of Incubators. Further analysis of this participation overcomes the limitations of this study.

³ In this scenario, the ReINC have developed several actions during the nearly ten years of existence. We can mention the achievement of the annual meetings, the support for the participation of the managers of incubators to national seminars conducted annually by Anprotec, running courses for training of managers of incubators in matters of interest, such as negotiating and managing projects. Moreover, the ReINC is always concerned about doing projects that meet the needs of their incubators associated.

⁴ The National Plan of Incubators is formed by federal institutions that have lines of support for Incubators as CNPq, Finep and Anprotec. The resources of the program are from the Yellow Green Fund, administered by FINEP and with grants from CNPq.

Through a method of working the Plan's Public Call together with their associated incubators, conducted a survey aiming to find out what were the main shortcomings of their businesses incubated. From the results of that research, it was decided by the elaboration of the project "Consolidation of Enterprise Incubator of Rio de Janeiro systems through Cooperation".

This project, which was approved in the call for proposals of the National Plan of Incubators, was created through a partnership between some incubators associated with ReINC: Incubator of UERJ; Technology Incubator of PUC-Rio; Incubator of Inmetro; Technology Business and the Popular Cooperatives Incubators of COPPE / UFRJ; Incubator of the UFF, the CEFET/RJ Incubator and the Nucleus Serrasoft. Its overall goal is to strengthen the incubated companies of ReINC through shared services to strategic sectors, developing the economy of the state of Rio de Janeiro. Therefore the proposal was divided into 3 major projects covering the following topics: cooperation, communications and consulting.

Following this goal of the project, ReINC decided to hold the project "Networking Values of supply for the Oil and Gas Division" aimed at the qualification, technical and commercial businesses incubated the various entities related to the supply of products, services or processes for the oil and gas sector of Brazil, through the development of the following activities:

- Development of structuring methodology (pilot) of incubated companies action in the market;
- Transferring knowledge gained through the development of actions included in the methodology for companies incubators involved in the process;
- Information systematization as a tool to support the identification of opportunities for business;
- Supply and demand identification and coordination in the sector.

For that decision, incubators had as their guiding principles to focus their efforts on a specific and significant sector and, at the same time, prioritize concrete actions that allow the interaction among business incubated and incubators. In that sense, it was clear the decision of not investing time and effort in preparation of studies for consulting or diagnoses, but on direct intervention activities.

It was with these principles in mind that has been selected the CEU, coordinated by the engineer Alfredo Laufer, which, since the beginning, put as methodological training proposal and advising to incubated companies in prospecting concrete market, with its systematic and collective discussion in order to produce a methodology that was appropriate and replicable by the incubators network. The very constitution of the CEU gave account of that goal, being formed by professionals in the area of engineering and media, with extensive experience in leading companies in the sector of oil and gas⁵.

That proposal was especially challenging for the ITCP. This institution was conceived in 1995 as a center of technology that would make available the knowledge and resources accumulated in public university to generate, through the support to the training and development of worker cooperatives (incubation), alternatives for employment, income and citizenship for individuals and groups in a situation of social and economic vulnerability. Developed institutionally as a university extension program belonging to COPPE, clearly

⁵ The CEU's for the Project were: Alfredo Laufer, Renata Petrocelli; Sérgio Magioli; Lia Blower and Carla Zeltzer.

combined with a research project and education, ITCP understands the cooperative popular as a tool for transformation. For better fulfillment of their goals it proposes to: a) work with groups and not individuals alone, b) encourage cooperation not only within the group, but between this and his social environment, c) develop a form of more egalitarian and democratic management and reward to the work than that prevailing in society, d) education and the proliferation of knowledge as one of its pillars.⁶

In that sense, the Project for the ITCP was understood as a way to stimulate and enable the cooperatives to enter into incubation of a more sustainable and valued relationship in the market, historically adverse to them. In other words, a way to work on concrete actions for corporate social responsibility and to allow changes in the valorization of their work and access to resources and rights for the members of incubated cooperatives, the structuring goal of ITCP. It was also understood as a mean of strengthening relations between incubators in ReINC, goal that was clear from the beginning of the Project.

The Methodological Proposal of the Project

The team of CEU made a methodological proposal that were toward the interests of ReINC: producing new capabilities and providing access to new resources for incubated companies from the promotion of interaction among them. In other words, the proposal had as an objective much more than the mere achievement of business in the oil and gas sector.

Accordingly, the proposal were related and sought to achieve three important networking concepts and the business promotion: a) understand the companies as living organisms, which must be open to changes and new knowledge (Senge, 1998), b) promote social networks, and c) articulate communities of practice, understood as spaces for construction and definition of common practices among various actors (Wenger, 1998).

These three concepts are articulated with a greater goal that gave its name to the project: forming a network of values, to develop a set of active relationships among the actors involved in the project in order to create and exchange material and intangible goods, especially with regard to the construction of new capacity, and give greater awareness to all involved (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

With these pleas, which relate to an emphasis on concrete actions and interaction, the CEU, ReINC and incubators agreed that the objectives of the methodological proposed were:

- Dynamic participation of all the actors involved in the process.
- Constant interaction between the entities involved.
- Creation of innovations to society.
- Management in social responsibility.

These goals were articulated with the following specific objectives:

- Systematization processes of manufacturing, marketing and management to companies participation in the emerging market of oil and gas.
- Verification and analysis of the business state of art.
- Systematization of the continuous training of leaders and teams in each examined area.

⁶ For more information on the emergence and development of methodology Incubation of the ITCP see: Guimarães (1998) and Guimarães & Solomon (2006).

- Survey of business opportunities and possible obstacles along the entities and companies in the oil and gas industry, related to the products and services of companies selected from incubators network.
- Interaction with key actors and entities for the development of business among incubated companies and the oil and gas sector in the focused segments.

It is interesting noting that in the long list of activities planned for the 6 months of the project (see Annex I), four types of actions are listed as structuring of the entire work:

1. The planning and systematic record of activities throughout the project, promoting evaluation meetings and collective revisions of the program, involving the CEU, incubators of ReINC and incubated businesses selected.
2. The achievement of collective workshops to promote training spot that had a focus on stimulating the practice, so that incubated businesses "leaving the field" and come back for a collective evaluation and further training.
3. The promotion of Practice Communities throughout the process, drawing tools of technology information and communication.
4. The production of more specific technical knowledge on the part of CEU for incubators and their businesses incubated, in the context of the market exploration in oil and gas sector and in the acquisition of more general capabilities to improve the production and marketing of businesses.

The Project, Popular Cooperatives in action, and analysis: main lessons.

Initially the proposal seemed more than daring: the point was to set the obligation of the active participation of all actors involved that had an enormous diversity in its history and resources. Involving incubators of the most diverse institutions (can be seen in the list above of the members of ReINC) and, above all, very diverse businesses, not only by the production sector in which they are located, but by the social diversity of its members, many in very distance places in the social structure. This issue appeared more clearly with the cooperatives: How to include groups from low social and economic ranks in shares for an industry with the dynamism that the Oil and Gas in Rio de Janeiro represents? How to involve them with technological base entrepreneurs?

Common sense would have indicated to go back in the proposal, but methodological choice and daring political decision from ReINC, CEU and ITCP, opened the doors to the work of cooperative members. It was developing a true social network, growing gains from diversity and not excluding. These were clear principles since the beginning in ReINC and in Project. Not only the work of CEU and Incubators of ReINC were accordingly, but many of the cooperatives leaders and most diverse companies knew the opportunity, and this was one of the major gains of the Project.

Specifically, 32 companies were selected by ReINC incubators, being 8 of them popular cooperatives incubated by ITCP. According to what can be observed in Annex II, were approximately 14 companies that actively participated in the Project. Such participation, even though not ideal, was significant considering the methodological proposal stemmed from the principle of a strong and active participation of the companies.

The tangible results of the project were the implementation of 8 business between 6 incubated companies and companies of Oil and Gas Industry - such as the big national

company, Petrobras - involving two cooperatives: Cootrabom, in the area of recycling, and Coosturart, in the area of sewing (see Annex III), besides the production of technical documents on the Industry for ReINC.

The Project had as the higher aim the production of new knowledge and skills to be produced and collectively appropriation, developing a network of values. In our opinion this was effectively conducted, benefiting in a greater extent of incubated businesses and incubators that managed to participate more actively in the whole process, and giving subsidies to their replication and institutional consolidation in ReINC and their incubators.

Analyzing the main results of the project in its original proposal, and seeking to draw lessons from the debate, we can emphasize the following points:

- i) *The benefits of the collective practice and diversity.* One point very well evaluated by the participants was the promotion of workshops where the consultants offered knowledge about the oil and gas sector, but more especially geared businesses for direct action⁷. After the guidance meetings, the exchanges between the participants were even greater at the time of making simulations, where each should show how to plan and behave with a potential client. In these meetings, popular cooperatives received comments from the consultants of CEU, incubators managers and, more important, from colleagues from other companies with greater resources, such as the areas of software and jewelry. There were dialogues where the involved shares had much to learn from each other, and where the proposal to create a network of values was really done.
- ii) *The learning by doing.* Workshops and monitoring of CEU had, as already shown, focus on practice. It was in concrete search of each company and its experience in negotiating (new in many cases) that incubated businesses gained new knowledge, enhanced in meetings and discussions with other companies, CEU and other incubators.
- iii) *The systematic opening for changes.* The Project set in their pleas of the active participation of the actors involved, to allow their improvement, too. This allowed improvements throughout the process. We can mention the division into groups of incubated businesses, not by the production sector or resources, but by time of incubation and capacity (interests) in getting involved in strong series of proposed activities. Similarly, greater attention to presence meetings was incorporated in respect to the original proposal.
- iv) *The difficulties of active participation.* If the results were positive it was not because everything happened as expected. In particular, the promotion of exchanges throughout the process through tools of information technology - mainly via e-mail - has not had the expected reaction. When the meeting was not dependent on the presence and if the initiative to use a tool not always considered friendly - list of discussion - the heterogeneity of the incubated companies and their daily activities appeared as a major obstacle to the exchange. Surprisingly, however, popular cooperatives were who attended most of these spaces, contrasting the lack of resources, they had the initiative to travel to the computer room that ITCP offered and thus seize the opportunity to obtain significant information and advices from the CEU's consultants.

⁷ Report CEU-ReINC, December 2006, pp. 14-20.

- v) *The opening of new social spaces.* The specific activities promoted by CEU, especially the meetings with managers of major companies in the sector of oil and gas, were much appreciated by the leaders of businesses incubated. In the same way, were very well evaluated the talks with businessmen and workshops with leaders of recognized success. In the case of popular cooperatives, the opening had an even greater meaning. Be able to negotiate, listen and be professionally recognized were a great learning and contribution to the leaders of cooperatives, breaking several social barriers. It also allowed the large companies achieve concrete actions on corporate social responsibility, including people of low income in its production chain and respecting their autonomy and capacity.

- vi) *Production of systematic knowledge to its replication.* The concern by the CEU to perform periodic reports, notes and technical meetings facilitated the greater ownership of the process by the leaders of the more actively participating incubators. As in the case of the incubated companies, different obstacles have not permitted the desired participation of all incubators. Material systematized, however, now allows access to part of the foreground even for these incubators. In the case of ITCP, the decision to prioritize in the same year the Project and the assessment on their capability enabled a satisfactory involvement and Project's knowledge replication to those cooperatives that could not actively participate in the first time⁸.

Conclusions

From the analysis of the proposal, the implementation and the outcome of the Project Values of Supply Networks for the Oil and Gas Industry arise some conclusions for discussion with other incubators and networks.

We can say that the Project has, in fact, create a network of values, involving incubated companies, incubators, team of consultants and the structure of the network of incubators, ReINC. New knowledge and skills were created for the exploration of the market in the Oil & Gas Industry. Such advances also involve knowledge of institutional functioning of this sector and of large enterprises belonging to it. It includes, also, and not least, the knowledge of various forms of management, which was acquired in the various workshops where companies from different sectors interacted with consultants, managers of incubators and also for large companies. In short, tangible and intangible assets have been produced and acquired collectively, as the purpose of a network of values.

In the same sense, the interaction enabled to create an identity of the movement of incubation in Rio de Janeiro and incubators began to act together with a shared purpose, guided by the feeling of having in common the fact of being in the movement of incubation and in this way being introduced to other actors, in the specific case, large and medium-sized companies in the Oil and Gas Industry and public institutions.

⁸ During the month of August 2006, technicians of the ITCP, with the most actively cooperated who had participated in the project, offered a workshop for cooperatives that could not participate in the Project. It was an activity with focus on fair Rio Oil & Gas do Rio de Janeiro, documented by the ITCP and assessed as positive by all its participants.

In the case of the work of incubated popular cooperatives, their active participation is of particular importance. First, being agents within a network of values, such as the one built by the Project, meant a gain of knowledge and recognition. Exchanging experiences and, above all, building actions together with leaders of companies with greater resources, consultants and leaders of incubators, brought new capabilities for cooperatives. Similarly, the cooperatives more active participated along with the ITCP on the replication of this knowledge to other cooperatives, which contributed to consolidate its capabilities and multiply the effects of the Project.

This work with the cooperatives, which has great importance not only in the short term, also served for having new four business in the area of oil and gas in the same year, involving large and medium companies in the industry (see Annex III). Thus, as already highlighted, moved up to create actions on Corporate Social Responsibility, understood as the building of partnerships for the inclusion in the productive sector of persons considered socially vulnerable, in a way that valorize their work, recognizing and enhancing their capabilities .

The work done by CEU, Relnc, ITCP, incubators and incubated shows the importance of a collective initiative, where the difficulties serve to acquire new knowledge and multiply it. This process of construction has as strong guidance for the work among heterogeneous and diverse actors, but with a focus on building an identity. It was from this diversity that aroused the greatest results, breaking historical barriers and bringing social benefits for entrepreneurs from different areas and, in particular, to strengthen the institutional action of a network of incubators. The analysis made here had the objective, therefore, to contribute to the debate within the movement of incubation in their efforts to work for social and economic transformation by the application, replication and strengthening of scientific and technological knowledge.

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Annex I:

Activities for the Project Network Values of supply for the Division of Oil and Gas.
(Source: CEU-ReINC Report, December 2006).

1. Development of the methodology and information prior questionnaire; questionnaire to visit staff to companies.
2. Meeting for presentation and final development of the methodology with REINC and managers and selection of participating companies.
3. Visits team's CEU businesses incubated.
4. Workshop sales for selected companies with presence of the managers of incubators.
5. Creation of communities of practice, information technology, services and products.
6. Individualized assessment of all forms of exploration of the market sent by the companies.
7. Delivery of the report of visits to the incubated companies.
8. First meeting of joint evaluation.
9. Division of the companies participating in two groups (according to prospecting maturity of the market).
10. Workshops for presentation (simulation of negotiations on the market).
11. Consultancies for each incubated company.
12. Reports of exploration of the market.
13. Draw up a letter of submission of the program REINC for the companies in the sector of oil and gas.
14. Collective visits to the market.
15. Workshop to prepare for the Rio Oil & Gas Meeting. Second Project evaluation.
16. Extra visits to companies in IT.
17. Rio Oil & Gas Meeting.
18. Promotion of lectures from professionals in the market for incubated.
19. 3rd meeting of Project evaluation.
20. Reporting and technical notes for ReINC.

Annex II:

Participation of businesses incubated in the Project.
(Source: Report CEU-ReINC, December 2006).

Activities	Presents	Absents
Visits to companies	47%	53%
Group's meetings	50%	50%
Reports of prospecting activities	8%	92%

Company	Visits to companies	Group's meetings	Reports of prospecting activities
ABC	50%	50%	0%
AgeMcia	80%	100%	23%
Arte e Reciclagem (cooperativa de artesanato) *	13%	50%	0%
Artenarede	0%	0%	0%
Artevisivo	78%	100%	54%
Bom Appetite (cooking cooperative) *	0%	25%	0%
Cabeça de Negro	0%	25%	8%
Camargo, Guimarães e Carvalho Advogados	0%	25%	0%
Caus Bambu	14%	25%	0%
Codecta	0%	0%	0%
Console	86%	50%	0%
Controll System	100%	25%	0%
Coomub (Recycling cooperative) *	25%	50%	8%
Coopama (Recycling cooperative) *	50%	50%	8%
Coosturart (sewing cooperative) *	75%	100%	15%
Cootrabom (Recycling cooperative) *	86%	100%	23%
Decision Models	40%	75%	0%
Delícias do Rio (cooking cooperative) *	25%	75%	0%
Dinamicoop (IT cooperative) *	25%	50%	8%
Estúdio Criatura	22%	25%	0%
Ethos Brasil	88%	75%	38%

Company	Visits to companies	Group's meetings	Reports of prospecting activities
Fator Brasis	0%	25%	8%
Meristem	33%	25%	0%
Milestone	60%	25%	0%
Minds at work	33%	0%	8%
Nós do Cinema	0%	0%	0%
Outras Letras	0%	0%	0%
Praia Vermelha	50%	50%	15%
Silicon Strategy	67%	50%	8%
Sócio Design	88%	50%	15%
Superwaba	67%	50%	0%
Wais	0%	0%	0%

* Company incubated by ITCP.

Annex III:

Business conducted by companies incubated from the activities of the Project.

(Source: Report CEU-ReINC, December 2006).

- Coosturart * - Selected in the Petrobras *Fome Zero* Public Call, will receive training in labour-and resource for the construction of a shed.
- Coosturart * - Sale of promotional shirts for the company Gaia.
- Cootrabom * - Supply of recyclable material for the company Mushroom, contacted during the Rio Oil & Gas.
- Cootrabom * - Providing packaging for promotional shirts for the company Gaia.
- Design Partner - has been hired to perform the upgrade of the site of Gaia and has other budgets under evaluation by the same company.
- Ethos Brazil - Order of institutional jewels for the company Falcon.
- Artevisivo - Production of a banner for the company Labtox.
- AgeMcia - Close of business pilot with the company Agecom.

* Cooperative company incubated by ITCP.