'TECNOLOGIA SOCIAL' AND SOCIAL CHANGE: THE CASE OF AGÊNCIA DE REDES IN RIO DE JANEIRO
Tecnologia social e mudança social: o caso da Agência de Redes no Rio de Janeiro

FABIO PRADO SALDANHA – fabio-prado.saldanha@hec.ca
HEC Montréal – Montreal, Canadá

NATALIA AGUILAR-DELGADO – natalia.aguilar-delgado@hec.ca
HEC Montréal – Montreal, Canadá

MARLEI POZZEBON – marlei.pozzebon@hec.ca
Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo da FGV – São Paulo, SP, Brasil
HEC Montréal – Montreal, Canadá

Abstract
The case provides an opportunity to understand how *tecnologia social* – a South American concept that might be seen as an equivalent to social innovation – can help promote social change. To illustrate the potential of social technologies, the case of Agência de Redes is presented. The case is intended for use at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Its purpose is to promote the discussion of the south American concept of *tecnologia social,* as well as to analyse of one particular *tecnologia social* using a conceptual model to understand the mechanisms that might promote social change.
Keywords: *tecnologia social*, social innovation, social change.

Resumo
O caso é uma oportunidade para entender como a tecnologia social – um conceito sulamericano que pode ser visto como equivalente ao de *social innovation* – pode ajudar a promover mudança social, Para ilustrar o potencial das tecnologias sociais, o caso Agência de Redes é apresentado. O caso é pensado para uso nos níveis de graduação e pós-graduação. Seu objetivo é promover a discussão do conceito sulamericano de tecnologia social, bem como analisar uma tecnologia social em específico por meio de um modelo conceitua, a fim de entender os mecanismos que podem promover mudança social.
Palavras-chave: tecnologia social, inovação social, mudança social.

Introduction

Marcus Faustini faces a big challenge in his quest for more development in underprivileged communities. Acting as a social and cultural activist, he has in his resume a long list of initiatives that provide opportunities for individuals living in popular communities to propose projects of social impact in their territories (see Figure 1). Among these initiatives we find the Agência de Redes para a Juventude, which is so far the most impacting methodology of social change that he and his colleagues have ever developed.

Agência de Redes para a Juventude (hereafter Agência de Redes) is an initiative of the NGO Avenida Brasil, led by Marcus Faustini and other partners. In 2011, the NGO launched this project

with the goal of working with 300 young people from 6 territories in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Agência de Redes' staff does not see the methodology they develop with young people as a social project, but rather as a *tecnologia social*. Moreover, the organization describes the methodology as "a platform for social entrepreneurship and innovation that recognizes the young people as creators instead of vulnerable individuals assisted by social projects" (Faustini and Soares, 2014).

The main objective of Agência de Redes is to change the perception of reality of young people living in deprived neighborhoods by delivering an original methodology in the cities where the training is delivered. With the intention of stimulating young people to develop ideas and transform these ideas into projects that will impact their territories, Agência de Redes helps to awaken the creative and entrepreneurial spirit of these youngsters and encourages them to develop cultural, social and environmental business projects. As mentioned by Marcus Faustini, the mission of Agência de Redes is to unveil "the purpose of life" to young favela residents and to provide them the means to provoke social change in their communities. Due to its success and emerging public recognition, the program was adapted and had its methodology been transferred overseas to countries such as England and Ireland[1].

Figure 1. The social entrepreneur behind Agência de Redes

Agência de Redes Para Juventude
@AgenciadeRedesParaJuventude

Marcus Faustini is the mastermind behind AdR. He is a 43-year-old Carioca, born and raised in Cezarão - the largest residential complex ever built for poor residents of Rio located in Santa Cruz, the West zone of the city - has a multi-faceted career as a writer, filmmaker, theater director, producer, educator and cultural activist. Faustini has been an important player in the cultural scene in Rio since 1998 and also had a significant role in the student movement, serving as vice-president of Rio's Student Association.

He is a weekly columnist at O GLOBO -one of the most important newspapers in Brazil - where he writes about culture, identity, behavior, access to the city and ideas for social transformation. He has received many awards and public recognitions.

Stanford, 2015, cddrl.fsi.stanford.edu

Despite the success, Marcus Faustini was told the grant program provided by a major Brazilian foundation will be cut for the next year. However, this unfortunate news may be a disguised blessing. He and his colleagues spotted an international foundation, with more resources

---

[1] Respecting the same main principles, *The Agency*—the English name given to the British initiative—is currently being deployed in London, Manchester, Cardiff and Belfast, helping to excluded young people to propose social projects impacting their communities.

than the current one, which focuses its grants on projects that promote social change. The challenge remains that Faustini and his partners need to present a robust proposal for the intended sponsor: in addition to quantitative and qualitative data (numbers of people being impacted and their life stories), this foundation requires a more conceptual explanation on the mechanisms that Agência de Redes developed in order to promote social change.

In terms of numbers, they have a lot to present: by 2018, Agência de Redes had already helped to create 267 original proposals and implement 93 projects in different fields such as culture, education, environment and health involving more than 3000 participants. Captivating stories, they also have quite a few. Quickly, the example of Afonso, Caio and Suélen comes up to his mind. Every day, these guys collect used cooking oil from the local restaurants and other residents in their community on the West side of Rio de Janeiro. This oil would most likely be inappropriately discarded due to the precarious waste management system in the region. After collecting the oil, they sell it to a local soap manufactory in exchange for money and soap, which is redistributed in the community that supplied them with the oil. The business model of their social environmental project relies on obtaining this raw material at no cost, selling it and distributing part of the benefits to the community.

But the call for grant proposal of this foundation has two clear requirements: 1) To justify why the project may be seen as a tecnologia social; 2) To identify the social actors, the methods, the tools and the social practices through which the project creates social change.

Intuitively, Marcus Faustini and his colleagues know how Agência de Redes creates social change in many communities. The issue is that it takes time to reflect on their actions, rethink them in a more conceptual way, and, write them down into a grant proposal grant format. A time that they actually do not have for this moment. In order to start an initial sketch, Marcus Faustini had the idea to ask this task for a new intern, Clara.

Clara has started to work for Agência de Redes only a couple of weeks ago. Marcus Faustini thinks it is a good idea to get a fresh perspective on what they do:

> "Clara, I have a challenge for you. We have prospected a new possible sponsor for the next year. In their call for grants, they request proponents to explain why the project is a tecnologia social, and what are the mechanisms of the project that creates social change. I know that you are quite new here, but I'd like to ask you to sketch an initial response to this, based on what you may find in our materials. Besides, your fresh look may bring new insights for us. I need to quit for this important meeting with another possible sponsor, and at the end of the day I'd like to see what you have written."

After these few words, Clara was both anxious and excited to show that she is not there for nothing. She thus started to find some information on the internet and in some internal documents about the mission and approach.

Agência de Redes para a Juventude – mission and approach

Clara wanted to work at Agência de Redes because she was fascinated by the idea that the organization was in favor of the design and development of projects by young local agents themselves within their own neighborhoods, unlike many other social projects that she has participated in. By acknowledging that living in deprived neighborhoods often requires considerable levels of resilience, boldness and creativity, Agência de Redes sees young people as knowledgeable agents capable of channeling these skills for their own profit, as well as for the good of their communities. However, to achieve this, the organization also works to break up the stigma that a favela is poor in resources by developing in young people the ability to perceive the social and cultural capital present in their communities. In other words, by focusing on the potential that a

---

favela has—instead of those resources it does not have—the ultimate purpose of Agência de Redes is to promote citizenship awareness among disadvantaged youth, all the while integrating a network of contacts to ultimately empower them to take ownership of their territory.

Clara started to look for information on how the Agencia de Redes did that. She found that the recruiting process for the project begins with a team of volunteers from Agência de Redes that literally goes door-to-door in the communities asking young residents: "Do you have an idea? Yes? No? It doesn't matter; come visit us!" Many of these recruiters are either previous participants or part of the vast network of Marcus Faustini. Both in person and through Facebook, these recruiters distribute promotional material and tell their own stories to attract new participants.

The main selection criterion in this search is to identify ordinary young people with any apparent talent that are also motivated to do something and create an impact in their community. Future participants are also informed that during the training, each participant receives a scholarship amounting to approximately 50$ US per month, which will be doubled during the implementation of the project in the last month.

At the same time, 50 university students are selected to act as mentors for participants. These university students are preferably from the same community and they follow another methodological training offered by Agência de Redes in order to be able to provide support for the participants on their journey. As recognition for their effort, these university students receive an extension certificate granted by the well-known Federal University of Brazil.

Agência de Redes Methodology[2]

Once the recruitment phase is complete, Agência de Redes conducts a series of workshops designated as "*cycles of stimuli*". Clara never had the chance to participate to any of these training programs but, by doing some research, she found in a catalogue that Agência de Redes published, that the methodology is composed of original tools such as *compass*, *inventories*, *maps, bestiary,* and *abecedary* (Figure 2). These tools help participants to develop ideas for intervention in their territories and to extend their solidarity networks. By reading about these tools and practices, Clara understood that the methodology aims to break paradigms: participants are exposed to situations in which they are forced to revise and transform their views of themselves and of their territory. In what follows, we show some excerpts of Clara's notes on the methodology.

Compass
In the first workshop, Agência de Redes proposes the concept of the *compass* for young people. This tool is used to orient the initial desire that led the participant to the training program, which will be useful to drive the individuals' motivation throughout the process. Participants create their own compass, on which each cardinal point has a specific role: in the North, they will express their initial desires or personal wishes; in the South, they will sketch an idea of a project; in the East, they will describe the likely way of expressing this idea; and in the West, they will illustrate the territory where this idea might be implemented. If during the training program participants lose sight of their initial desires and ideas, the compass will help them to remember their motivation and adapt or adjust their next actions.

Inventories
In the second workshop, young people are invited to resignify their individual identities when a new vocabulary is introduced to them: one of *inventories*. Using this tool, young favela residents are asked to find and collect material and immaterial objects that are present in their daily life. The

---

[2] This section draws extensively on the catalogue published by FAUSTINI, M. and SOARES, L. E. (2014). *Agência de Redes Para a Juventude*, Petrobras.

5

'TECNOLOGIA SOCIAL' AND SOCIAL CHANGE: THE CASE OF AGÊNCIA DE REDES IN RIO DE JANEIRO
Marlei Pozzebon, Fabio Prado Saldanha, Natalia Aguilar-Delgado

purpose is to help them to compose personal inventories that somehow represent their identities in a symbolic way. In this workshop, participants are invited to wonder about what a favela resident is and resignify the perception they have about themselves.

Figure 2. Illustration of some of the tools of the Agência de Redes methodology

Source: https://www.facebook.com/AgenciadeRedesParaJuventude/

Maps

Once these inventories are created, in the third workshop, the goal is to extend this resignification work to the neighborhood. In this context, a new tool is presented to them: *maps*. Participants thus receive a map of their community where they will situate the references collected in their inventories, with the purpose of visualizing the relationships among their material and immaterial references and how they interact with the community.

Cabinet of curiosities

For the fourth workshop, favela residents are oriented towards expanding their inventories by grabbing other references present in the community. The new tool introduced to them for this purpose is the *cabinet of curiosities*. Inspired by overseas explorers of the Modern World that used to present to the public items collected in their travels, the methodology asks participants to circulate in their territories and to interact and collect visual and symbolic references that will have some relationship with their future projects. It is thus in this step that the idea of becoming "curious" is introduced to them. Curiosity is the force that exhorts people to travel and discover things.

Project abecedary

After wandering around in the community and discovering new things, in the fifth workshop, the methodology aims to help participants organize and channel their discovering. Here, the tool of a *project abecedary* is presented to them. The idea to develop this tool emerged from a YouTube video in which the philosopher Gilles Deleuze was invited to systematize his ideas in the form of an abecedary. In this case, participants are also invited to create the abecedary of their projects. Each letter evokes an idea related to the project. This is the first writing exercise and a sort of organic formulation of their projects' ideas. At the end of this workshop, the abecedarian is delivered to a Ph. D. graduate student who will help participants to better formulate their ideas. The logic here is that, if well systematized, the ideas will generate a powerful project that will impact the community.

Bestiary

In the sixth and final workshop, the "*bestiary*" tool is presented to favela residents, with the intention of making them free to dissociate ideas. Here, young participants are invited to explore their conceptions of beasts and monsters with the purpose of making a list of the monsters that they found in their communities. By doing this, they are encouraged to make unexpected combinations for their projects.

Desincubator and incubator

Once the "*cycle of stimuli*" is over, participants then start to design their projects with the support of university students and some academic mediators. Young people need to structure their ideas in feasible projects and defend them to a jury composed of external experts and mentors from different sectors of the society (public, private and academic). They have one month to establish a timetable and to budget for the project since they have to pitch their project to a jury that will evaluate their proposals.

The projects considered promising by the jury go to the next step, to the "*desincubator*", in order to be developed and implemented. Projects considered inconsistent will go to another "*incubator*" to receive recommendations with the support of academics and mediators. Participants whose projects were not validated in the first round have the opportunity to either continue working on their own projects, or to join another project that has a common axis.

For the defense of the projects to the jury, each group structures the presentation of their project by clarifying the purpose, mission, action strategies, budget, schedule, etc. Participants are also encouraged to organize a seminar presenting the projects to their communities: they invite their relatives, friends and local representatives with the intention of establishing a network of partners for their projects.

After that, a new phase begins: another period of seminars and meetings but this time with strategic partners from the private and public spheres. Groups must integrate management tools and concepts in the projects and find entrepreneurs in the community to engage in the project. Groups must also defend and sell new projects to another jury formed by professionals and scholars in management, economics, culture and entrepreneurship. The success of this second sales pitch gives a sort of stamp of achievement, and with this, an amount of 5,000 USD for the project. Although the focus of this stage is the refinement of the project, participants still consult with their university mentors who help to validate some propositions. The final step is the implementation of the projects.

In the final stage, Clara learnt that the projects are then launched in the last two months of training, when Agência de Redes is focused on providing support for groups working on communication projects: logos, press releases, visual identity, etc. She saw that many interesting projects have seen the light of day through this program (see in Figure 3 some projects that are still ongoing and that generated important impacts on their communities).

Clara understood that Agência de Redes ends its mandate and participants are free to choose to continue with their projects or not. The goal is not to ensure the long-term durability of the projects, but if that is necessary, Agência de Redes can eventually offer support for grant programs as requested. Nevertheless, she starts to wonder that the purpose of Agência de Redes goes beyond the success of individual initiatives.

_____

7

'TECNOLOGIA SOCIAL' AND SOCIAL CHANGE: THE CASE OF AGÊNCIA DE REDES IN RIO DE JANEIRO
Marlei Pozzebon, Fabio Prado Saldanha, Natalia Aguilar-Delgado

Figure 3. Some projects born at Agência de Redes

"Favela Organica" is a project created to tackle the issue of food waste, reusing discarded food to create gastronomic dishes. The NGO created after the participation at AdR helps families to avoid food waste through workshops.

Favela Orgânica
@favelaorganica

Project leader, Regina Tchelly, has become internationally known for her work. She now presents a cooking show on TV where she teaches recipes that valorizes the use of local ingredients integrally.

Photo: https://www.facebook.com/favelaorganica/

"Fala Roça" is a newspaper created by young residents of the Rocinha, one of the biggest favelas in Rio. The project is a colaborative platform that was born in 2012 with the help of AdR and it communicates many issues going on at the favelas, from the perspectives of its residents. It includes information on new opportunities for education and work in the city.

JORNAL FALA Roça

http://www.falaroca.com/

Providenciando a Favor da Vida

http://www.providenciando.org.br/

"Providenciando a Favor da Vida" is a project developed to assist teenage and young mothers in the favelas. It started in 2011 with the support of AdR. In 2014, it became an association that promotes different types of prenatal workshops and activities, providing counseling and also material support.

Deconstructing and reconstructing the territory

Now, for Clara, it is much clearer that what the Agência de Redes' methodology proposes is about changing the lenses with which youth in the favela see their world: the favela becomes a window of opportunities.

She remembers that one of the first things that Marcus Faustini told her, when she was hired, is that their approach is "plastic and artistic". In order words, the methodology holds cognitive and aesthetic objectives for the favela to counteract deeply rooted beliefs in the collective imagination. More specifically, the favela residents must demolish—initially from the inside of their own minds—the negative view that society holds over them: lazy, useless or even potentially criminal. Instead, they are curious, creative and a source of value and power for the community.

_____

8

'TECNOLOGIA SOCIAL' AND SOCIAL CHANGE: THE CASE OF AGÊNCIA DE REDES IN RIO DE JANEIRO
Marlei Pozzebon, Fabio Prado Saldanha, Natalia Aguilar-Delgado

The other thing she understood better is that after going through a process of mental deconstruction, participants must find new combinations of cultural, artistic and emotional signs to redefine their self-image and the one of their community. Social change is, according to her perception, not only cognitive but also aesthetic insofar as young people are invited to further rebuild new representations of the complex reality that they live in. The duality "shortage versus wealth"[3] also orients the methodology of Agência de Redes. For Clara, this sentence summarizes what Agência de Redes does: where one usually sees poverty and scarcity in these communities, the organization proposes to see opportunities for improvisation and innovation. She asks herself…: 'Would that mean that, in a sense, the latent and creative potential could be inversely proportional to the abundance of material resources?"

Nevertheless, the methodology influences the trajectory of participants in different ways. She was told that sometimes a youngster realizes in the first workshop the potential he or she has to become a change-maker, sometimes it takes more time, and sometimes it never happens. Unfortunately, not all participants reach the finish line. In addition, plenty of projects end up being short-run initiatives. Clara was equally told that many of the young favela residents quit in the middle of the program for different reasons. Even if Agência de Redes provides a stipend for their participation, the majority need to work in precarious jobs to improve their family income. Other factors, such as violence, drug trafficking, and undesired pregnancies may also influence the decision to continue participating in the project.

A conversation that she had a week ago with a coworker echoes her mind: "We are not here only trying to entertain young favela residents: we are really concerned about the future of a whole generation". She now fully understands that the methodology has a strong political mission aiming at achieving two goals.

First, it aims to open up new opportunities for excluded young people by linking their network of contacts—thus the words "agency" and "network"— to the public and private spheres of the city. Second—as a spin-off of this connection of networks between underprivileged territories and the public and private spheres—, to redefine public policies in education and to overcome situations of neglect, prejudice and violence in which young favela residents currently find themselves in Brazilian society. Although many participants do not finish the methodological program or do not give continuity to their projects, Agência de Redes reportedly does succeed in seeding this political message in their minds.

This is one of the reasons why she is at Agência de Redes now. She is doing an internship for one of the projects recently led by Agência de Redes. Related to stimulating the rise of community leaderships through the program, "Todo jovem é Rio" is a project where emerging young leaders host different activities in their own communities following the methodology of Agência de Redes to spur new projects in the favelas. In the advertisement for the program, one affirms: "One day, one of us will be Rio's mayor" (Figure 4).

---

[3] « Carência versus potência » (Faustini and Soares, 2014)

_____

9

'TECNOLOGIA SOCIAL' AND SOCIAL CHANGE: THE CASE OF AGÊNCIA DE REDES IN RIO DE JANEIRO
Marlei Pozzebon, Fabio Prado Saldanha, Natalia Aguilar-Delgado

Figure 4:. Political mission of Agência de Redes

Coming back to the initial task

After exploring different sources, Clara decides that she has enough material to sketch a table listing all the mechanisms that the Agência de Redes' methodology developed with the intention of creating social change in the lives of the individuals living in communities. And she also feels inspired to propose an initial answer explaining why Agência de Redes may be considered as a tecnologia social.

What are the arguments that Clara would use to answer these two questions?

1) What are the main principles that may support the argument that Agência de Redes is a *tecnologia social*?
2) Who are the social actors and what are the methods, the tools and the social practices involved in of the Agência de Redes' methodology?

Marcus Faustini will get back to the office in a few hours looking for the answers to start the grant proposal writing. Clara is excited to prove that she is also curious and creative.