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Eixo Temático: Inovação e Sustentabilidade

DESIGN THINKING AS A TOOL TO TACKLE SOCIAL DEMANDS – A DOUBLE CASE STUDY IN THE BRAZILIAN SEMIARID

DESIGN THINKING COMO FERRAMENTA PARA RESPONDER A DEMANDAS SOCIAIS – UM ESTUDO DE CASO DUPLO NO SEMIÁRIDO BRASILEIRO

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ABSTRACT

This articled aimed to unveil what Design Thinking (DT) strategies social enterprises (SEs) have been employing to improve their results and address to the social problems stated as their objectives. It considers as operational definitions of SEs and effectiveness the ones provided by Lasprogatta and Cotten (2003) and Diochon and Anderson (2009), respectively. Moreover, the DT steps encompassed the ones suggested by Brown and Wyatt (2010), namely Inspiration, Ideation and Implementation as part of data analysis process. This study also utilized a qualitative approach through the analysis of semistructured interviews, documents, magazines, newspaper articles and videos, data that were treated and analysed with the assistance of the ®Nvivo 10 software. Research findings demonstrated that, although not employing DT terminologies, SEs have been using analogous processes to boost their results, improve internal procedures and respond more promptly to social demands. All three steps were started at different points in time and motivated by distinct stimuli, nevertheless, DT strategies resembled related in both SEs studied and enabled them to be more adaptive, flexible and ingenious. This paper's contributions are two-folded. Theoretically, it allows to advance with the literature on DT and, in practical terms, it brings to light how SEs operating in of Brazil's most underdeveloped regions have been effective despite the harsh environmental conditions.

Keywords: Design Thinking: Social entrepreneurship; social enterprises; semiarid; Brazil.

5° FÓRUM INTERNACIONAL ECOINOVAR
1ª CONFERÊNCIA INTERNACIONAL DE SUSTENTABILIDADE E INOVAÇÃO
Santa Maria/RS – 9 a 12 de Agosto de 2016

CISI 2016

1   INTRODUCTION

Social enterprises (SEs) have been acting like enablers of social change, either by empowering vulnerable communities in different countries or by addressing to social demands that have not been matched by neither the government nor the market. Moreover, these organizations have taken advantage of innovative business models to tackle issues such as illiteracy, vulnerability to extreme weather conditions, poor healthcare and rural exodus, for instance (ALTER, 2007; KERLIN, 2010).

Social Entrepreneurship (SEship) has been, through the past years, a prolific area for scholars and practitioners. The efforts of social entrepreneurs is documented as ones of important influence on positive societal transformations. SEs consider business model associating economic, social and environmental objectives with an orientation towards a different future (THOMPSON, 2008; HUYBRECHTS; NICHOLLS, 2012; BORZAGA; GALERA, 2012).

This trend towards innovation drives social entrepreneurs to foster a mindset for perceiving problems differently (DEES, 1998). In this sense, challenges are interpreted as business opportunities and chances to change a determined social condition. To do so, such mindset needs to utilize tools and strategies from various sources (ZARAH *et al.*, 2008; ZARAH *et al.*, 2009). In this regard, SEs need to innovate their products, services and processes to attain autonomy as well as fulfill their social missions once they do not normally have access to the same resources commercial enterprises do. Furthermore, there have been an academic consensus on innovation as an essential characteristic of social enterprises (MAIR; MARTI, 2006; HUYBRECHTS; NICHOLLS, 2012).

Intending to comprehend the use of different tools mentioned above, this study aimed at investigating the intuitive use of Design Thinking (DT) and its strategies as a tool employed by managing teams in social enterprises to reach innovative and successful outcomes. Through the in-depth case studies of two SEs operating in the poor Brazilian semiarid region, more precisely, in the northeastern state of Ceará. This research had the objective to understand how DT has been used, whether openly stated or not, as an enabling element for these social entrepreneurial organizations to be effective.

This study was also underpinned by the specific objective of identifying innovative mindset and practices intertwined with managerial abilities as well as environmental aspects, which have worked as enablers of effectiveness for the enterprises studied. Even though innovation is a constituent element of SEship, it cannot be deemed as its sole factor for success (MASON; KIRKBRIDE; BRYDE, 2007; MOREAU; MERTENS, 2013). Regarding the DT model taken into account in this study, it was chosen to use the one from Brown and Wyatt (2010), which divides DT in three steps, namely Inspiration, Ideation and Implementation.

In addition, the Brazilian literature about SEship, although it has expanded over the past years, has not considered the use of DT as an enabler for SEs. Thus, it leaves a gap to be fulfilled here as well as a research question to be answered (OLIVEIRA; ROCHA; PINTO, 2009; COMINI; BARKI; AGUIAR, 2012; VASCONCELOS; LEZANA, 2012; LEAL, FREITAS; COELHO, 2014).

In operational terms, this study employed a qualitative approach to analyse 23 semi-structured interviews with key actors to these SEs, videos, documents, newspaper articles, internet posts and other related material. The results demonstrated that social entrepreneurs do take advantage, although most often intuitively, of analogous DT strategies to create the processes that have made their positive social work possible.

The sampled SEs have been operating in both urban and rural contexts in different municipalities over the years and have been acknowledged as well as awarded for their efforts. Therefore, it was believed that scrutinizing their practices could contribute to adapt these

initiatives to other realities, to scale up social transformations or/ and permit other social entrepreneurs to solve similar challenges.

Taking into account the aspects considered thus far, this paper is divided in seven sections. After this introduction, the following section deals with the theoretical underpinnings that served as basis for this research, namely social entrepreneuship and social enterprises as well as concepts connected with DT. The third section presents the methodological aspects that granted to operationalize this research. Afterwards, the fourth section analyses and discusses the research findings. The last section offers the concluding remarks as well as suggests directions for future studies.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS

This section introduces concepts about social entrepreneurship, social enterprises and Design Thinking given that their understanding was crucial for this study. Thus, it first presents important definitional points about SEship and SEs, secondly, it conveys key ideas regarding DT.

2.1 Social entrepreneurship and social enterprises – key aspects

Social enterprise was coined as a term in Italy during the 1980s as a way to describe innovative private activities established voluntarily. Citizens started these initiatives aiming to deliver social services or to administrate economic activities designed to assist disadvantaged people. Concurrently, organizations with comparable objectives were created in other European countries (BORZAGA; DEPEDRI; GALERA, 2012).

In North America, conversely, the term social enterprise would refer to for-profit initiatives performed by non-profit organizations to fund the pursuit of social missions. This approach stresses the search for commercial ways to raise funding, issue that has been managed by non-profit organizations through different ways. These problems consisted, for instance, in increased costs, growing rivalry for a smaller number of grants and donations, and the rising competition from pure for-profit companies taking part in the social service sector (BORZAGA; DEPEDRI; GALERA, 2012).

In Latin America, the array of NGOs and social enterprises has also been increasing since the 1980s, which happened as a civil society reaction to issues like unemployment, inequality and social marginalization. Moreover, in the region, the solidarity economy movement comprises distinct segments, actors and organizations. It is coordinated with a worldwide movement that criticizes capitalism, even though its objectives are normally linked with starting enterprises to achieve individual, social and ecological development. SEs could be considered a part of this locally oriented reaction (BORZAGA; DEPEDRI; GALERA, 2012).

If SEship would be depicted as a spectre, in academic terms, at one end it is possible to find scholars such as Dees (1998), who supports that social enterprises should have an unconditional social orientation. Such orientation is an essential criterion, and financial wealth is supposed to be only a strategy to achieve the social mission. Social goals, however, may also come along earned incomes.

Nevertheless, there are another group of researchers, who typify SEs differently. For example, when an non-profit organization is combined with activities aiming at generating profits, they are often named *hybrids*. In this sense, Peredo and McLean (2006) gave this status to the *Grameen Bank* and other microcredit ventures. These authors conveyed two types of organizations that have social goals and generate income. The first one, like the *Grameen Bank*, has the objective to supply a good or service beneficial to disadvantaged individuals. The

second type does not have a direct involvement in social goals, although provides assistance for other organizations, foundations would belong to this second kind, for instance.

Hence, the boundaries between not-for-profit and for-profit organizations engaging in social missions are not precise (CHOI; MAJUMDAR, 2014). The bottom line would be that initiatives with social goals can distribute profits to their owners and still be understood as social enterprises. This social orientation would be witnessed in the companies' behaviours towards different stakeholders. Even though social orientation are relevant and do exist, there has been academic disagreement on the extent of social goals would be relevant from one initiative to another (PEREDO; MCLEAN, 2006).

Attempting to provide a clear definition to SEship, Zahra *et al.* (2009) foregrounded previous research wherein the place of social goals is equal to economic goals, and thus, referring to what is named the double bottom line. However, the prominence of social goals has become broadly accepted by the literature on SEs and SEship (MAIR; MARTI, 2006; ZAHRA *et al.*, 2009; CHOI; MAJUMDAR, 2014).

Another concept that has to be differed from SEship is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Although CSR and social entrepreneurship can be somehow related, there were distinctions that needed to be highlighted for this research. For instance, if social entrepreneurs obtain financial profit with for-profit initiatives, these earnings must serve primarily as means for achieving social improvements. Furthermore, difference between these two concepts would be that CSR does not need to be innovative or entrepreneurial, both defining features that would set apart CSR from SEship. In other words, CSR is usually reached by aligning corporate policies with institutionalized practices and norms, hence, lacking innovativeness even with the danger of serving as a disguise for irresponsible behaviour in fact (AUSTIN; STEVENSON; WEI-SKILLERN, 2006).

For operational purposes, this study considered social enterprises for-profit initiatives started by not-for-profit organizations in order to attain an alternative source of revenues through these commercial activities (LASPROGATTA; COTTEN, 2003). The purpose would be to reduce reliance on sources of income from outside the organization, also as an strategy to address to the ongoing governmental withdrawal from social services, trend that has been intensifying since the late 1970s and early 1980s (KULOTHUNGAN, 2010).

Furthermore, regarding social entrepreneurial effectiveness, it was chosen to define it drawing on Diochon and Anderson (2009). These authors outline effective SEs as ones capable of tackling social demands with success, but being as least dependent as possible on external funding like governmental subsidies or donation from private entities. Moreover, an effective SE would need to comply with democratic governance principles and take into consideration the human development of its staff.

Since this research aimed to scrutinize the intuitive use of DT as well as other innovative-driving tools in SEs. The following section details how this element was outlined within the scope of social entrepreneurial organizations, intertwining the concept of innovation and Design Thinking as a way to induce innovation.

2.2   Design thinking

Schumpeter (1984) emphasized the importance of innovation as a key driver for development. Currently, innovation has become of the most important sources of both differentiation and competitive advantage for organizations. That said, organizations have searched for efficient models to improve their innovation processes, creating new ways to fulfill consumers' demands (BAREGHEH; ROWLEY; SAMBROOK, 2009; LIEM; BRANGIER, 2012).

The innovation process comprises a series of steps that guide the creation of innovation related activities, ranging from the generation of ideas to the final implementation of solutions (BONINI; SBRAGIA, 2011). To enable its practical application, innovation processes are designed through models that encompass practices, procedures and policies to foment the development of such innovations (LONGANEZI; COUTINHO; BOMTEMPO, 2008).

According to Brown and Wyatt (2010), the traditional trend among designers was to draw attention to the way appearance and functions products are conceived. In recent years, however, designers have extended their approach by fomenting integrated systems to deliver products and services. In DT, constituent and consumer ideas are blended with in depth and fast prototyping intending to move away from assumptions that would probably hinder effective results. DT tackles people's demands by enabling an optimistic, constructive, and experiential infrastructure, focused on the actors who will consume the specific product or service.

 The popularization of DT among private companies has been taking place because it helps them at being more innovative whereas it leads to products and services brought faster to the market, thus, businesses adopting DT differentiate, increasing competitive advantages. Nevertheless, DT has been crossing sectoral borders, being used in the public, for-profit, and nonprofit fields. It sets up effective solutions by building solutions up from the bottom, instead of imposing them from top-down (BROWN; WYATT, 2010).

According to Bukowitz (2013), DT reaches innovative solutions by assessing the context wherein the innovative project is developed. These authors define the term as a tool that seeks, through creativity, to understand and solve complex problems. Moreover, this definition was also the one employed throughout this research.

Over the last decade, DT has been used as a tool to foment innovation in different kinds of organizations. DT encompasses generating ideas in a multidisciplinary group focusing on solving problems; the use of design goes beyond how products look, it is more than just working on products' appearance. DT is applied in conceiving new solutions, which also covers strategic aspects for the business (BONINI; SBRAGIA, 2011; MACEDO; MIGUEL; CASAROTTO FILHO, 2015).

Insofar as an innovation evolves, it is necessary to observe its technological viability, if it matches the company's business strategies, whether it can be converted into value for customers and if it is indeed an opportunity. Regarding DT's operationalization, Brown (2008) introduced its three constituting phases. The first, *inspiration*, is the process of discovery centered on human beings. Afterwards, *ideation* implicates in generating, developing and testing ideas. Thirdly, *implementation* is then defined as mapping a way to reach the market itself.

Brown and Wyatt (2010) provided further explanation to the three steps named above, such clarification is simple whereas comprises the main processes that DT does consist. Therefore, this three-step model was also adopted in the analytical process of this study to understand how the social enterprises sampled operationalize, whether intuitively or not, DT processes and if this use turned out to increase the effectiveness of their efforts.

The inspiration phase encompasses the analysis and synthesis of activities, which are then divided in two steps. First, the preliminary step has the objective to reframe and understand the problem. This step has the goal to outline needs and opportunities that will guide how solutions will be created in the next phase (Ideation). Secondly, after this initial data collection, analysis and synthesis are driven by insights organized in a way to reach patterns and create challenges that can actually help to understand the problem. In terms of depth, this immersion involves the broad comprehension about the issue to be solved and it goes from superficial to expressive points regarding this issue (ELLWANGER; ROCHA; SILVA, 2015).

People's understanding on the scope of the problem comprises their involvement, taking into account techniques that may subside this comprehension in order to reach some specific

5º FÓRUM INTERNACIONAL ECOINOVAR
1ª CONFERÊNCIA INTERNACIONAL DE SUSTENTABILIDADE E INOVAÇÃO
Santa Maria/RS – 9 a 12 de Agosto de 2016

2016

knowledge, thus, making possible its application in different contexts and serving as basis for the following phases, i.e., ideation and implementation. In this regard, ideation aims at generating innovative ideas for the project and it employs tools for synthesis devised during the analysis phase, the focus is to stimulate creativity and generate solutions complying with the context in question (ELLWANGER; ROCHA; SILVA, 2015). Finally, implementation regards the structural deployment of the strategies devised in both previous stages, such deployment needs to be followed closely, constantly evaluated and cyclically revised to ensure effectiveness (BROWN; WYATT, 2010).

Inasmuch as social enterprises normally lack the resources, their commercial counterparts have access, it becomes important to devise strategies to keep innovating for being adaptive to an ever-changing environment. Therefore, it was taken into account in this study that the use of DT related strategies, even intuitively, has assisted SEs to reach effectiveness in their undertakings. To explain how such identification was carried out, the next section details the methodological aspects entailing this research and its operationalization.

3   METHODOLOGY

This study intended to investigate the use of Design Thinking strategies, whether intuitively or not, in social enterprises. Due to the novelty of the topic, its nature can be described as exploratory and descriptive. It is exploratory because wanted to answer a research problem with few previous studies from which information could be collected. Moreover, it is descriptive once it intends to outline the behaviour of a phenomenon, identifying characteristics of a determined problem (COLLIS; HUSSEY, 2005).

In this regard, this research adopted a qualitative approach and used the multiple case study as investigation strategy. In alignment with the study's objectives, Hair Jr *et al.* (2005) stated that qualitative approaches characterize or refine research problems, testing conceptual structures normally involving the use of small samples or case studies.

Following Yin's (2010) guidelines, a multiple case study was developed through literal replication in order to identify cases that would lead to similar results. Such replication also took into account the theoretical sampling process proposed by Eisenhardt (1989). In other words, cases were chosen intentionally and based on theoretical reasons, focusing on the ones that could increase quality and value of the information to be collected.

The unit of analysis in this study was the social enterprise. The operational definition chosen involved SEs engaging in commercial activities. In other words, these SEs sell goods or services to customers in the regular market. Furthermore, these SEs were started by NGOs, which had been non-profits at first, but engaged in commercial activities to become less reliant on external funding such as governmental grants or private donations (LASPROGATA; COTTEN, 2003).

The organizations chosen showed openness and were cooperative to the study, besides fitting the operational definition from Lasprogatta and Cotten (2003). The first organization selected was the *Instituto Tecnológico e Vocacional Avançado* (ITEVA – Advanced Technological and Vocational Institute) located in the municipality of Aquiraz and the social enterprise MidiaCom.net, which was started in 2004, ten years after the foundation of the parent NGO.

The second organization was the *Agência de Desenvolvimento Local* (Agency of Local Development – ADEL in Portuguese), which began working with fomenting entrepreneurship among young people in the poor countryside in Ceará and its social enterprise *Fundo Veredas*, a microcredit organization created to provide funding to start small rural businesses in its territory. This social enterprise is located in the municipality of Pentecoste, but operates in other

5° FÓRUM INTERNACIONAL ECOINOVAR
1ª CONFERÊNCIA INTERNACIONAL DE SUSTENTABILIDADE E INOVAÇÃO
Santa Maria/RS – 9 a 12 de Agosto de 2016

CISI 2016

close cities. This SE was started in 2012 as an effort to increase the NGO's financial autonomy and enable their graduates to start their own businesses.

In ITEVA, 16 (sixteen) people occupying important managerial functions were interviewed: the general coordinator, the technical coordinator, the administrative-financial coordinator, the chief of finances and accounting and his direct supporter. Representatives from the government, private companies and NGOs were also heard to bring to light the importance of innovative forms of thinking for their success.

Regarding ADEL and *Fundo Veredas*, 7 (seven) interviews were performed with members key managerial staff members to gather information related to the objectives stated here. This set of interviews encompassed the managing directors of the NGO and the Social enterprise; coordinators who help operationalizing programs; and staff in the social enterprise who would be essential to run *Fundo Veredas*.

The questions made to interviewees and the later analytical process to which such data was exposed took into consideration the three steps of Design Thinking suggested by Brown and Wyatt (2010). In other words, the use (and effective results obtained) these SEs give to tools related to inspiration, ideation and implementation phases permeated both data collection and analysis.

The analysis of primary sources was performed with the assistance of the software *Nvivo*® version 10.0 for qualitative analysis. Mozzato and Grzybovski (2011) drawing on Gray (2004), highlighted that the use of softwares is a good strategy to validate a study. These authors foregrounded the use of different computer programs for data analysis; *Nvivo*® is then cited for its increasing employment in Management research. In addition, the software facilitates and qualifies the analytical process. Nevertheless, according to the same authors, although computer programs do make the analysis and interpretation easier, they are unable to replace the scholar's active role in managing these processes.

Considering the objective that motivated this study, sources were analysed in parts and related information was distributed into the nodes within Nvivo®. Aiming to enhance such distribution, Bardin's (1977) content analysis technique was performed; its three chronological steps pre-analysis, material exploration and result treatment, inference and interpretation encompass a set of methodological instruments that can be applied to different kinds of discourses.

The codification process started with "parent-nodes" created for each question made to interviewees about the utilization of DT tools in their social enterprises, following a procedure analogous to the one used by Souza (2014). Within each parent-node, "subnodes" were then built in and related to the questions asked as well as to the connection between sources and nodes. In this sense, the questions built into each parent-node and related subnodes were linked to DT's steps, namely inspiration, ideation and implementation and how these steps would be used in the studied SEs.

4   DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In the light of the processes idealized by Brown and Wyatt (2010), this discussion of findings brings forward the how key DT processes such as inspiration, ideation and implementation are sorted out in the studied cases. The goal here is to make clear the intuitive ways social entrepreneurial team have used to increment their social work through DT.

4.1   Inspiration

Brown and Wyatt (2010) stated that ideation starts with the "brief", to be understood as an array of mental restraints that provides the project team with a structure from which to begin.

5º FÓRUM INTERNACIONAL ECOINOVAR
1ª CONFERÊNCIA INTERNACIONAL DE SUSTENTABILIDADE E INOVAÇÃO
Santa Maria/RS – 9 a 12 de Agosto de 2016

2016

This framework benchmarks the measurements for progress and establishes a set of goals to be attained. For example, the authors suggest that price point, available technologies, capabilities, and market segment could make part of this structure. This subsection deals with how the inspiration process takes place in the SEs samples in this study. In this regard, the Figure 1 presents the interviewees' accounts on the way such process has been happening.

Figure 1 – Extracts from data codified within the Inspiration process

INSPIRATION	
INTERVIEWEES	**DATA**
ITEVA-Midiacom.net's General Coordinator	"The best way of showing someone what needs to be changed it's not by telling that straightforward. You need to show him or her their qualities and, then, to talk to them what they need to improve." (Interview extract)
ITEVA-Midiacom.net's Administrative-Financial Coordinator	"Self-teaching is when you seek information you need individually, we work here with many people able to self-teach collectively and cooperatively. It's amazing what we reached here with information that is available and free. So, it's like that, I read, study, but I learn much more when there a certain need and I pursue the information I am required to get where I want." (Interview extract)
ITEVA's leading supporter for the Accounting area	"We learn every day here. Almost everything that is done there's something new to learn, dealing with both people and tasks. I can tell you that I learn something new all the time although I have time to study for real at home or in some free time, I think I study about three to five hours every day to learn the thinks related to my job." (Interview extract)
ITEVA's leading supporter for the Accounting area 2	"It depends on the necessities. For example, when I came my area was programming, I studied a little here and they [the teachers] sent materials for us to study at home based on the time we have. The same thing happens with everybody. After some time learning, we take part in the demands. If you're in my area and there's some software to be produced, if there's something we don't know, we go and study to learn about that or we ask someone who know, so he or she can teach us. We acquire knowledge like that, during the demands and when some necessity emerges." (Interview extract)
ADEL's Chief Executive Officer	"We do many courses; participate in events, talks… We like to observe how others position and what other partners do, people who perform the same things as us. So, these spaces are very important for that. We always try to do to these spaces to be protagonists, to not only listen or just be there. What most motivates me is the fact that everything we do is really participatory and learning is collective." (Interview extract)
ADEL's field educator	"When I'm here learning happens all the time. For example, now I'm planning a lesson on commercialization strategy, so I'm having a hard time with some topics because they're not from my area, for example. So, I'm learning putting my hand on it. I go there, study, read a lot and talk to my colleagues because they are my trainers too." (Interview extract)
ADEL's Chief of Operations	"Sometimes I go to Fortaleza for courses and when I come back I share with the others. If the organization can afford it, you go there and do it, but in general, we share things. ADEL is a lot like that. Besides that, people can do many free online courses that we share with one another. We even determine how much time the person must devote to the course." (Interview extract)
ADEL's on-field articulator and operational coordinator	"What was the main for ADEL to be working with youngsters? Or with farmers? Or with bee farmers? What was the objective? So, to understand the reasons why people were working helps a lot to develop strategies and learning. We also learn a lot by studying ADEL's materials; they've always had materials for training, updating to do each activity. In most cases, there's a scheme to follow, a manual with the

5º FÓRUM INTERNACIONAL ECOINOVAR
1ª CONFERÊNCIA INTERNACIONAL DE SUSTENTABILIDADE E INOVAÇÃO
Santa Maria/RS – 9 a 12 de Agosto de 2016

CISI 2016

	objectives of that capacitation. So, we read and develop a lesson to contemplate those goals, once there's an agenda, we just need to follow it. Here, you need to know what to do in practice." (Interview extract)

Source: Elaborated by the author using the sources codified in Nvivo® 10 software for qualitative analysis.

At this point, the organization needs to consider what is also relevant for its customers to comprehend the work to be done and, by doing so; it becomes able to deliver a product or service aligned with clients' expectations. Brown and Wyatt (2010) recommend that the project team is ought to investigate clients' demands and obtain a profound understanding about the kind of outcome expected. The focus must be client-centered, considering, of course, the elements emerged from the brief.

In Midiacom.net this is done, although not carrying the DT's terminology, insofar as the project team visits the clients, organizes meets with them and discuss what type of software and functionalities, if it is the case, they require. In an honest conversation, the customer is heard and advised about the most suitable solution for his or her demand. Furthermore, the project team studies the market and takes into consideration physical as well as human resources at their disposal to grant the product or service required will be delivered as requested.

This process was constructed intuitively by refining what performed at the first clients when the team of young workers still did not know exactly the tasks to be performed. They realized that the most appropriate solution was to ask the clients themselves what they wanted in order to time and resources while manufacturing the software. This strategy had twofolded outcomes, it first enabled the SE to get closer to its customers, creating empathy and it allowed the SE to reduce costs as well as final prices.

Interestingly, the inspiration process in ADEL-Fundo Veredas follows a different path, as the "clients" to be heard are communities of small farmers and their children (the ones who participate in the rural entrepreneurship course) in different places. The project team needs to visit these communities and to become acquainted with their specific demands in order to elaborate the kind of technical assistance or course that will be delivered.

This effort is facilitated by the fact that the project team members were born in those same communities, thus, they have an indigenous perspective of what is needed. For instance, if the farmer works with swine or poultry, they will have different urgencies related to their livestock whether it be the kind of medicine to use or the most suitable ration to be served.

Nevertheless, despite it does not utilize the term inspiration the studied SEs employ related strategies. The literature on social enterprises has affirmed before the role of working together with customers to achieve better outcomes, to build loyalty and create an organizational culture of rapid adaptation to clients' demands (BORZAGA; SOLARI, 2001; HYNES, 2009; ALMARRI, 2014). In addition, Ben-Ner, Ren and Paulson (2011) also supported that managers and employees in social enterprises are indeed encouraged by an agreement with one another and the active support for their organizational and social objectives.

After getting to know what are the clients' requirements with the inspiration process, it is imperative to idealize solutions that address to these demands. Hence, the next section outlines the ideation process, which responds to these issues, in these social enterprises.

4.2 Ideation

In order clarify the ideation process, it is relevant to reminisce what Brown and Wyatt (2010) asserted about it. In this sense, these authors defined ideation as a building synthesis process wherein the managing team systematizes their observations and hearings to reach solutions and opportunities. This approach would help to expand alternatives and foster insights

5º FÓRUM INTERNACIONAL ECOINOVAR
1ª CONFERÊNCIA INTERNACIONAL DE SUSTENTABILIDADE E INOVAÇÃO
Santa Maria/RS – 9 a 12 de Agosto de 2016

CISI 2016

on new products or services. Moreover, as ideas emerge, it would be important to test competing ones so the probability of fomenting creative and attractive outcomes increases. This subsection demonstrates the strategies behind the ideation process that occurs in the SEs studied. Figure 2 displays the interviewees' accounts on such processes.

Figure 2 – Extracts from data codified within the Ideation process

IDEATION	
INTERVIEWEES	**DATA**
ITEVA-Midiacom.net's General Coordinator	"Ceará represents a little more than 2% of Brazil's GDP. Then, we have to keep in mind that it's a poor state and companies' contributive capacity is constrained, few companies can contribute and the ones that can end up pulverizing these resources. Added to that, you have many institutions in great need. So, the challenges are twofolded, you have little contributive capacity, which is necessary for investing in people and organizations. We solved this problem by strategically looking for resources outside the state." (Interview extract)
ITEVA-Midiacom.net's Administrative-Financial Coordinator	"The first [challenge] is the community and family demands, in some sense. If you ask them what kind of qualification they would like to have, maybe they wouldn't say digital communication. Thus, we have to work the contents and show results so we can be accepted. At the same time, you deal with different audiences and most of them work in areas such as agriculture or services. Then, when we realize the teenager has potential and he starts coming here more often for more training, sometimes 4 or 5 times a week or the whole week, that same parent begins asking: 'ok, but now who's going to help me?'" (Interview extract)
ITEVA's leading supporter for the Accounting area	"It depends on the necessities. For example, when I came my area was programming, I studied a little here and they [the teachers] sent materials for us to study at home based on the time we have. The same thing happens with everybody. After some time learning, we take part in the demands. If you're in my area and there's some software to be produced, if there's something we don't know, we go and study to learn about that or we ask someone who know, so he or she can teach us. We acquire knowledge like that, during the demands and when some necessity emerges." (Interview extract)
ADEL's Chief Executive Officer	"Communication is also a great challenge for us [the third sector with the government] especially at local level. Even the simplest information needs a lot of time to be obtained sometimes. I don't think they do so on purpose, though. It's the way they work, they got stranded and we turn out getting constrained in some situations because of it, got it?" (Interview extract)
ADEL's field educator	"We invested heavily in communication, to occupy as many spaces as possible. We send emails and people heard from us and that facilitate things, so, we got spaces to advertise our work. You know, the market for projects is based on visibility or indication; someone is always introducing someone else. Having a good and solid project helps a lot, but being visible is vital to decide where the resource goes." (Interview extract)
ADEL's Chief of Operations	"We started ADEL by thinking about something that needed to be done correctly and professionally, but with time, we specialized. Because of our contact with other entities and partners, we learned fast, many partners have their manual of instructions and it gets easier to execute the project the way they want, especially when we need to make the final reports. When we compare ourselves to other organizations and associations here in Ceará, we realize we are much more advanced because since out beginning we have focused on being professional." (Interview extract)

ADEL's on-field articulator and operational coordinator	"We needed to start enterprises adaptable to this climate; even so, we've been having some unexpected problems. Without them, we would have reached even greater results. When the first class finished in 2011, we had a strong drought, then two others in the following years, but we have endured and survived." (Interview extract)

Source: Elaborated by the author using the sources codified in Nvivo® 10 software for qualitative analysis.

In both social enterprises, ideation is intertwined by burgeoning communicative procedures meaning that the creative teams get together and converse, based on the information gathered, about which solutions would best align with what clients' actually require. In this regard, in ITEVA-Midiacom.net it was possible to notice that challenges are signified into answers and problems are redefined as opportunities to bring about innovation.

The accounts reported that the managing team needed to take part in councils wherein it held seats to deliberate about decisions regarding which policies the governmental administration would deliberate about the third sector at municipal level. This presence was required to legitimate the social enterprise (and it increased its legitimacy over time) as well as to ensure revenue from private companies. Something that was first noticed as a problem, turned out to be a solution that even helped the SE to improve its image with partners and collaborators. The team understood the challenge of participating in these councils as a form to grow the SE even further, and this decisive and problem-solving mindset, typical of social entrepreneurs (DEES, 1998; MAIR; MARTI, 2006; LIGHT, 2006), is fundamental to run an effective social initiative despite the limitation of resources.

Borzaga and Solari (2001) and Hynes (2009) stress that another key challenge SEs face is to secure the financial background to develop or expand its activities. In this regard, social entrepreneurs in ITEVA-Midiacom.net have addressed to this problem by looking for companies and partnerships in not only the state or the region, but also especially outside Ceará. For example, the managing team systematically visits companies in São Paulo to present the work they perform and suggest that these companies contribute with their work by depositing part of their income tax (up to 1% as permitted by the national law) in the FIA. This revenue is later withdrawn through the municipal government and the social enterprise is able to access it, thus, ensuring the continuity of its social activities as well as funding the basic operations the social enterprise needs to carry out to exist like any other business.

On the other case studied, at first, one of the main problems tackled by Fundo Veredas' team was to acquire trust from small farmers to work out their problems, the solution was to assemble forums of discussion to understand their needs and elaborate strategies in consonance with their expectations. Moreover, to assist those farmers it became necessary to engender infrastructure of transport and teaching so these farmers could be capacitated as well as served with the regularity and swiftness a service provided requires, whether it is from a social or commercial enterprise. In this regard, Dees (1998) emphasize the ability to solve problems in spite of constraints as fundamental for social entrepreneurial success.

The difficulty non-financial stakeholders and the public have to comprehend the social mission is another fundamental challenge SEs need to address (HYNES, 2009). In this concern, correspondingly to what was done with family farmers, ADEL has communicated its mission to different social clients by publicizing its efforts on the Internet, newspapers and other media as well as in the aforementioned community forums. Furthermore, word-of-mouth among beneficiaries has been important and it has expanded the work being done. In this sense, interviews and other data reported the relevance of such understanding and its benefits for enhancing positive outcomes.

4.3 Implementation

5º FÓRUM INTERNACIONAL ECOINOVAR
1ª CONFERÊNCIA INTERNACIONAL DE SUSTENTABILIDADE E INOVAÇÃO
Santa Maria/RS – 9 a 12 de Agosto de 2016

CISI 2016

Regarding the third step of the DT process, i.e. implementation, it is related to the time in which the most appropriate ideas generated in the previous stage become a tangible and implementable action plan. The heart of implementation is prototyping, in other words, to turn ideas into real products and services that will be tested and later refined. Prototyping allow DT to unveil challenges and unintended consequences, feature that, in its turn, enables long-term success to be attained with more reliability (BROWN; WYATT, 2010).

Similarly to what was performed in the previous subsection, the focus here is to present the strategies behind the implementation process that happens within the cases. Figure 3 displays the interviewees' accounts on these processes.

Figure 3 – Extracts from data codified within the Implementation process

IMPLEMENTATION	
INTERVIEWEES	**DATA**
ITEVA-Midiacom.net's General Coordinator	"In the production process, we realized the presentations needed to be done in a sequence. It was a kind of assembly line. Sometimes three people are working in one single slide. Each one is working in a part. In the end, it has to be put together because when it is played, it must work as one thing." (Interview extract)
ITEVA-Midiacom.net's Administrative-Financial Coordinator	"We innovated in the training, production, in reaching the students and fund-raising. For instance, about the students' education, the person arrives here and when he comes for the advanced training, receives two counselors, which he chooses; these people will help him daily, telling him how he can improve his performance, his teamwork, and his studies." (Interview extract)
ITEVA's leading supporter for the Accounting area	"At first, the course took 2 years. Then, it was shortened for just one because it was too much time that people needed to wait to get a job, and they needed jobs. After that, we needed to wait just one year, but many parents from people between 16 or 17 wanted them to work. So, we divided into smaller courses and got younger people to study because people from 14 to 15 don't work, and when they turn 16 or 17 you had time to teach them. The idea was excellent. We then modified, changed and implemented our whole didactic material." (Interview extract)
ADEL's Chief Executive Officer	"We started an 'entrepreneurship approach'; we went from a technical assistance organization, which executed projects in the productive chain, to a proposal connected with rural entrepreneurship. We were very agrarian, but we realized we could endeavor too and created projects like Fundo Veredas, Centers of Integrated Technologies and the Network of Rural Entrepreneurs." (Interview extract)
ADEL's field educator	"We started with a managerial structure for products to be sold to the city schools, in the regular commerce and in spaces like restaurants, aggregating value with things as packaging. Today, we've got honey in sachets, giving more quality to products that were very artisanal at first." (Interview extract)
ADEL's Chief of Operations	"In this regard, we've studying a way to release a fourth credit line for young people who did not undergo the program. We want to open to other people because there are more than sixty thousand youngsters who could access this credit. So, we can open a line to the community, to other young people." (Interview extract)
ADEL's on-field articulator and operational coordinator	"We thought the following thing, we've got the program and, now, the credit. So, what were we missing? Networking strategies! Then we went on to work creating networks between productive groups such as bee farmers, chicken or goat farmers and that would enable us to think commercialization in a bigger volume. We are thinking about it now and started an association in this direction." (Interview extract)

5º FÓRUM INTERNACIONAL ECOINOVAR
1ª CONFERÊNCIA INTERNACIONAL DE SUSTENTABILIDADE E INOVAÇÃO
Santa Maria/RS – 9 a 12 de Agosto de 2016

CISI 2016

Source: Elaborated by the author using the sources codified in Nvivo® 10 software for qualitative analysis.

As ITEVA-Midiacom.net developed, its computer programs have been used for its internal operations, but have also enabled solving problems with other social clients, as the software for financial reports has been ceded to organizations in need to formulate and comply theirs with official standards. In this regard, these innovative and cooperative practices help these organizations to address to common problems such as the legal issues pointed out by Alves and Koga (2006). These authors stated that although the Brazilian legal framework supposedly changed for the better in the late 1990s, there still would not exist a specific legal framework appropriate to organizations with social entrepreneurial features, thus, making good use of legal benefits would be difficult for these organizations.

The SE learnt how to diversify and innovate in its services and goods to address to new demands from its beneficiaries and customers. This is represented by the diversification in its portfolio. At first, the organization focused on PowerPoint® presentations and the training was driven to visual communication using this tool, although other softwares like CorelDraw® and Photoshop® were taught. Later, demands from students and the market led the social enterprise to invest in other segments such as programming and web designing. The production of authentic software as well as the creation of webpages became another capability and business opportunity pursed by the social enterprise that worked together with its clients to manufacture new products and courses.

In ADEL-Fundo Veredas, considering its social mission of mitigating as much as possible rural exodus, the organization transformed itself again to contemplate rural youth through entrepreneurship. The social entrepreneurial team perceived the hurdle to prevent rural exodus insofar as most people leaving the countryside were under 30 years-old and sought better job opportunities. The plan elaborated was to foster opportunities in the semiarid using the youth protagonism people from ADEL-Fundo Veredas knew well. In this regard, Borzaga and Solari (2001) stressed the need for SEs to bring forward different business models, fomenting innovation, to address to the multiplex of social demands they face gradually over time.

Considering these demands and collaborating with private companies, the SE offered a course comprising essential elements to open successful rural businesses Subjects as basic mathematics, strategic planning, business model creation and human development skills were integrated in a workload of more than 700 hours, which occur in ADEL's learning center in São Gonçalo and at the students' communities. ADEL's technicians accompany these learners to ensure the implementation of the business plans created during the course, to foment effectiveness and to secure the correct employment of the credit accessed through the *Fundo Veredas*.

Concerning the *Fundo Veredas*, the creation of the microcredit initiative was part of the innovative practices the organization has been conceiving to enable its work. After finishing the course, graduates faced bureaucratic obstacles to obtain the necessary funding to start their businesses. These difficulties are clear in the data as accounts report that out of the 30 students graduated in the first class of the course only 2 could get credit from regular governmental programs, feature that made almost compulsory for the NGO to innovate once again and devise a strategy to contemplate this demand.

5   CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research had the objective to foreground the use of Design Thinking strategies by two social enterprises in Ceará. Furthermore, a specific goal was to observe whether such usage was explicit or not, and the degree of success these organizations have been able to achieve due

5º FÓRUM INTERNACIONAL ECOINOVAR
1ª CONFERÊNCIA INTERNACIONAL DE SUSTENTABILIDADE E INOVAÇÃO
Santa Maria/RS – 9 a 12 de Agosto de 2016

ISI 2016

to the utilization of these cognitive and practical devices. To do so, Brown and Wyatt's (2010) three-step model was selected to analyse the way these DT was framed and employed within these SEs.

In this regard, research findings allowed concluding that inspiration, which consists in the project team creating a framework from which to begin, benchmarking their measurements of progress and setting the objectives to be realized, started in the moment clients posed their demands, inasmuch as the staff got together to scrutinize environmental and organizational elements connected with the upcoming project. The intention was to outline the most feasible solution to fulfill consumers' expectations. Intuitively, teams elaborated a plan that considered contextual elements and internal capabilities to produce the product or service required. Inspiration was deployed in an undeclared manner; DT was used as an innovation-inducing tool although not openly declared as such.

Ideation, which means the team going through a process of synthesis of what they saw and heard that can lead to solutions or opportunities for change, emerged analogously to inspiration. The team "brainstormed" solutions that could effectively solve their demands; no alternatives were excluded at that point, being sorted out in a later moment, after the brainstorming process was exhausted. Both social enterprises trailed a similar path with their respective teams, insofar as ideas were regarded and, only after all possible solutions were contemplated and analysed to full exhaustion, they were excluded or not, leaving room for the most suitable ones to be implemented in the next process.

In this regard, implementation dealt with turning best ideas generated during ideation into a concrete, fully conceived action plan. In the center of implementation lies prototyping that transform ideas into real services or products to be further tested and refined. Once the SEs worked in different fields implementing happened distinctly in the sense that ITEVA-Midiacom.net had an approach more similar to the one idealized by Brown and Wyatt (2010). The IT social enterprise could implement solutions in a faster and prompter way as well as discard less viable alternatives.

ADEL-Fundo Veredas orchestrated its implementation changing and prototyping in slower pace, but still trying to respond to demands effectively and launch services that could be the most appropriate solution to fulfill social clients and collaborators' expectations. Its intermunicipal coverage imply in another speed of action, making necessary to innovate also in this regard.

Innovation-oriented behaviors and mindsets have been key for the success of these social enterprises. This feature, in its turn, aligns with what the literature has been suggesting over the years and confirms the contribution of not only this characteristic to this type of organization, but also the importance of SEs themselves to the communities and environment wherein (and with whom) they are operating. Hence, this study has a further academic relevance as intertwines intuitive innovative strategies such as DT to social entrepreneurial effectiveness. Future research might investigate innovation related practices in other kinds of SEs or apply statistical techniques to correlate innovation and effectiveness.

Moreover, this research has practical implications as other social entrepreneurs can take advantage of practices described here to enhance their own processes, improving the results their SEs have attained. Practitioners can employ DT's tools to generate an optimistic and solution-oriented atmosphere in their organizations, helping to change vulnerable realities even more or scaling up work that has been performed currently.

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5º FÓRUM INTERNACIONAL ECOINOVAR
1ª CONFERÊNCIA INTERNACIONAL DE SUSTENTABILIDADE E INOVAÇÃO
Santa Maria/RS – 9 a 12 de Agosto de 2016

2016

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