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Relational capabilities in social alliances: similarities and distinctions in multiple cases

Capacidades relacionais em alianças sociais: similaridades e diferenças em multicasos

Capacidades relacionales en alianzas sociales: similitudes y diferencias en multicasos

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Abstract

Research objective: The aim of the present research was to analyze distinctions and similarities in the development of Relational Capabilities in different types of Brazilian social alliances.

Theoretical framework: For this purpose, the theoretical basis of Dynamic Capabilities was used, which encompasses Relational Capabilities.

Methodology: To carry out this research, a multiple case, qualitative and descriptive study was carried out from the perspective of the two organizations involved in the four social alliances studied, through semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

Results: We noted that knowledge is the key technology transferred between partners and this transfer is one of the most relevant rewards for organizations. In addition, alliances between "Civil Society Organizations and firms" are formalized through contracts, because the partners perceive their importance for the management of the alliance. The cases also point out that trust and efficient communication may be the most important aspects of alliance performance.

Originality: Studies on Relational Capabilities are still scarce in the literature, as it is the study of Relational Capabilities in Social Alliances. Social alliances play an essential role in solving complex social problems.

Theoretical and practical contributions: The findings of this research allow advancing in studies related to Dynamic and Relational Capabilities in Alliances and Cooperation, especially the social ones. Social Alliance partners can identify components and dimensions of Relational Capabilities that should be encouraged in their partnerships to ensure their success.

Keywords: Relational Capabilities, Alliances and Cooperations, Civil Society Organization, multiple case study.

Resumo

Objetivo da pesquisa: O objetivo da presente pesquisa foi analisar distinções e similaridades no desenvolvimento das Capacidades Relacionais em diferentes tipos de alianças sociais brasileiras.

Enquadramento teórico: Para tanto, utilizou-se a base teórica das Capacidades Dinâmicas, que englobam as Capacidades Relacionais.

Metodologia: Para a consecução desta pesquisa, um estudo de multicasos, qualitativo e descritivo foi realizado a partir da perspectiva das duas organizações envolvidas nas quatro alianças sociais estudadas, por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas e análise documental.

Resultados: Notou-se que o conhecimento é a principal tecnologia transferida entre os parceiros e que essa transferência é uma das recompensas mais relevantes para as organizações. Além disso, apenas as alianças com firmas são formalizadas por meio de contratos, pois estas parceiras percebem sua importância para o

gerenciamento da aliança. Os casos também apontam que a confiança e a comunicação eficiente podem ser os aspectos mais importantes para o desempenho da aliança.

Originalidade: Os estudos acerca de Capacidades Relacionais ainda são escassos na literatura, assim como o estudo de Capacidades Relacionais em Alianças Sociais. Ademais, as alianças sociais possuem um papel essencial na resolução de problemas sociais complexos.

Contribuições teóricas e práticas: Os achados desta pesquisa permitem avançar nos estudos relacionados a Capacidades Dinâmicas e Relacionais em Alianças e Cooperções, principalmente as Sociais. Ainda, os parceiros das Alianças Sociais podem identificar componentes e dimensões das Capacidades Relacionais que devem ser incentivados em suas parcerias para garantir seu sucesso e proficuidade.

Palavras-chave: Capacidades Relacionais, Alianças e Cooperções, Organização da Sociedade Civil, Estudo de multicascos.

Resumen

Objetivo de la investigación: El objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar las distinciones y similitudes en el desarrollo de Capacidades Relacionales en diferentes tipos de alianzas sociales brasileñas.

Marco teórico: Para ello se utilizó la base teórica de las Capacidades Dinámicas, las cuales engloban las Capacidades Relacionales.

Metodología: Para llevar a cabo esta investigación se realizó un estudio multicascos, cualitativo y descriptivo desde la perspectiva de las dos organizaciones involucradas en las cuatro alianzas sociales estudiadas, a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas y análisis de documentos.

Resultados: Se observó que el conocimiento es la principal tecnología que se transfiere entre socios y que esta transferencia es una de las recompensas más relevantes para las organizaciones. Además, solo las alianzas con empresas se formalizan a través de contratos, ya que estos socios se dan cuenta de su importancia para la gestión de alianzas. Los casos también señalan que la confianza y la comunicación eficiente pueden ser los aspectos más importantes para el desempeño de la alianza.

Originalidad: Los estudios sobre Capacidades Relacionales son aún escasos en la literatura, así como el estudio de las Capacidades Relacionales en las Alianzas Sociales. Además, las alianzas sociales juegan un papel esencial en la solución de problemas sociales complejos.

Aportes teóricos y prácticos: Los hallazgos de esta investigación permiten avanzar en estudios relacionados con las Capacidades Dinámicas y Relacionales en Alianzas y Cooperaciones, especialmente las Sociales. Además, los socios de la Alianza Social pueden identificar los componentes y las dimensiones de las Capacidades Relacionales que deben fomentarse en sus asociaciones para garantizar su éxito y eficacia.

Palabras llave: Capacidades Relacionales, Alianzas y Cooperaciones, Organización de la Sociedad Civil, estudio multicascos.

1 INTRODUCTION

Social alliances are strategic cooperations that focus on creating mutual value and positive social impact (Sakarya et al., 2012). Berger et al. (2004) argue that to be considered social, at least one Civil Society Organization (CSO) must be part of the alliance. Partnerships unite capabilities, creating access to resources and knowledge. Social alliances play an essential role in solving complex social problems (Barroso-Méndez, Galera-Casquet, & Valero-Amaro, 2014; Lee, 2015). Organizations can collaborate to create products and services that one organization cannot accomplish by itself.

To achieve good relationships and efficient resource exchange between different organizations, defined routines and processes must be implemented. Li, Zhou, and Wu (2017), Mcgrath and O'toole (2018), and Pudjiarti and Suharnomo (2018) all emphasize the significance of Relational Capabilities, a type of dynamic capabilities. These capabilities can be understood as routines or abilities developed by organizations to efficiently coordinate and use their relationships to achieve their desired goals (Mcgrath & O'toole, 2018).

The present study answers the call for research from authors who have stated the need for more empirical studies about social alliances (Sakarya et al., 2012). The literature also

underlined the necessity to investigate characteristics of social alliances such as commitment, trust, power, opportunistic behavior, and communication (Barroso-Méndez, Galera-Casquet, & Valero-Amaro, 2014).

Authors lament the lack of research about the origin of partnerships in Relational Capabilities studies (Rungsithong, Meyer, & Roath, 2017). In addition, authors such as Schilke and Goerzen (2010) state the importance of studying Relational Capabilities from the perspective of other types of alliances.

This paper seeks to understand the development of Relational Capabilities in Brazilian social alliances. In social alliances, Relational Capabilities have not been well studied yet, as pointed out by Schilke and Goerzen (2010). Steiner et al. (2017) also highlighted the need to understand the formation of these skills in a partnership. In addition, Sakarya et al. (2012) and Vock et al. (2013) indicated the need for empirical studies of social alliances in different contexts.

The research considers the development of the necessary competencies for managers to understand what is needed to build a successful partnership. Other studies have addressed Relational Capabilities in different strategic alliances. However, models and strategies developed for alliances in the for-profit sector may not be suitable for social alliances without this focus and are formed by organizations with conflicting institutional logic (Murphy, Perrot, & Rivera-Santos, 2012). CSOs must consider differences in Relational Capabilities when forming alliances with firms and public institutions.

Understanding the social importance of social alliances and the need for Relational Capabilities to achieve their goals, the objective of the present research was to analyze distinctions and similarities in the development of Relational Capabilities in different types of Brazilian social alliances. The article is divided into an introduction, theoretical foundation, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions.

2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

A social alliance requires that partners work on causes that interest them. Thus, firms need to find CSOs that work with causes related to their mission and products/services (Kim et al., 2012). CSOs must overcome the expectation of philanthropy. Volunteering by partner's employees can have a positive effect and help meet the goals of the partnership (Tsarenko & Simpson, 2017).

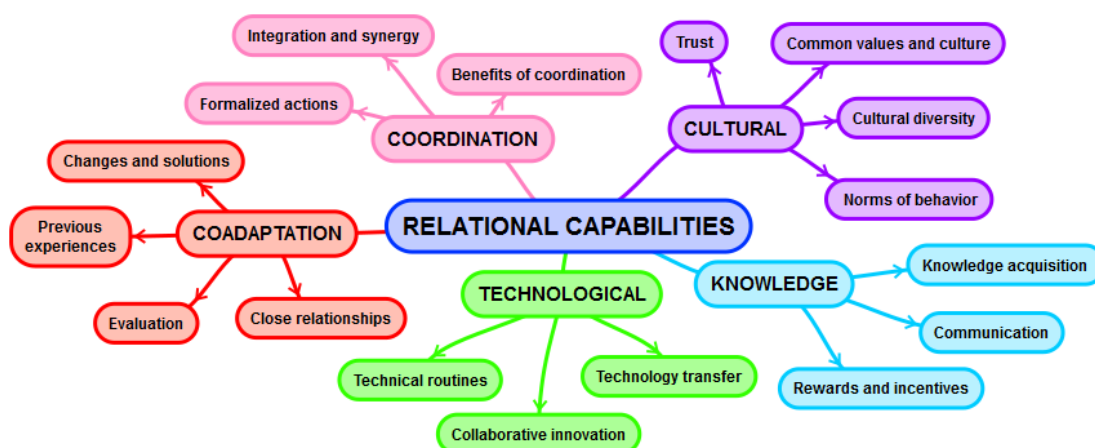
Besides achieving common goals, organizations seek social alliances to help their reputation and visibility (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Simpson, Lefroy, & Tsarenko, 2011), gain access to professionals specialized in subjects that the organization itself does not have (Berger et al., 2004; Liu & Ko, 2011), and increase possibilities for innovation (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012).

However, establishing trust (Das & Teng, 1998; Gjerding & Kringelum, 2018), power asymmetry within the alliance (Tsarenko & Simpson, 2017), and the bureaucracy of organizations and between partners (Gillett et al., 2019) in cooperation with different organizations can be difficult. To overcome such difficulties and develop a thriving relationship with the partner, organizations need to use Relational Capabilities. These capabilities are skills that enable the organization to manage conflict and coordinate a trustworthy alliance with the partner (Mcgrath, 2008). Thus, they are important for good communication between organizations and knowledge exchange (Yang et al., 2018). Managing social alliances can be complex, mainly because of the divergent priorities of the organizations involved when considering CSOs working with firms or public organizations. However, by developing and using Relational Capabilities, organizations

can enhance social alliance facilitators highlighted by the literature, such as trust, communication (Barroso-Méndez, 2014; Jamali, Yianni, & Abdallah, 2011; Tsarenko & Simpson, 2017), resilience, and synergy (Liu, Wai, & Chris, 2016; Gillet et al., 2019).

Some of the most cited models of Relational Capabilities in the literature include Johnsen and Ford (2006), McGrath (2008), Sarkar, Aulakh, and Madhok (2009), Ngugi, Johnsen, and Erdélyi (2010), Schilke and Goerzen (2010), and Alves, Segatto and De-Carli (2016), the latter being the most complete. Alves, Segatto and De-Carli (2016) built on the previous works to form a broader and more recent proposal. Moreover, the authors perceived the dimensions of Relational Capabilities as interrelated and interconnected and thus should be studied together (Alves, Segatto, & De-Carli, 2019; Giraldi et al., 2018; Guo, Yang, & Zhang, 2020). Thus, we used this model that divides Relational Capabilities into five dimensions (coordination, cultural, knowledge, technological, and coadaptation), and each divided into several components, as represented in Figure 1. The model was applied to social alliances following the described procedures.

Figure 1 Model of Relational Capabilities based on Alves, Segatto & De-Carli (2016)



3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

In the present research, four case studies were conducted in accordance with Yin (2018). Cases 1 and 2 occurred between a CSO and a firm. Case 1 was composed of the CSO Social Association for Equality of Differences (ASID *Associação Social para a Igualdade das Diferenças*) and Firm X. ASID aims to empower people with disabilities and their families. Firm X is a large food company that needs help creating its Corporate Social Responsibility Programs. Thinking about the social impact it wanted to achieve, about legal aspects related to the number of people with disabilities employed in the organization, and about ASID's mission, Firm X sought out the CSO to initiate their joint actions. This partnership had been active for approximately six years at the time of data collection.

Case 2 comprised the Bosch Institute CSO and Firm Y. The Bosch Institute focuses on the development of the communities around Bosch industries. In this sense, they try to develop these communities through education, helping many young people to enter the job market. Firm Y has different focuses, with education and knowledge transfer as its main ones. As a result, the two organizations joined forces to work with the education and professionalization of socially vulnerable young people who lived near the areas where

the two organizations operate. The alliance was approximately ten years old at the time of the interview.

Cases 3 and 4 were between a CSO and a public institution. Case 3 was the social alliance between Plan CSO and the Municipal Department for Protection of Women in Teresina (in Portuguese SMPM – *Secretaria Municipal de Proteção à Mulher de Teresina*), which has been in place since 2015. The goal of the alliance was to assist in empowerment projects for girls and women in the capital of Piauí and other regions of the state. The two organizations shared the same focus and could exchange knowledge efficiently.

Finally, case 4 was between CSO TETO Brasil and the Public Defender's Office of Paraná. The CSO contacted the public institution for cooperation on their shared goal of decent housing for people in social vulnerability.

Data collection occurred in the second semester of 2019. To ensure data triangulation (Flick, 2018), data was collected from the perspective of both organizations involved in the studied social alliance, using primary data (semi-structured interviews) and secondary data (websites of the organizations, their social networks, partnership proposals, and the reports that address results obtained from the projects).

In case 1, one of the co-founders (who is also ASID's executive director), an ASID project manager, the Human Resource Manager of Firm X, and the analyst responsible for the corporate social responsibility team at company X were interviewed. In case 2, the administrative manager of the Bosch Institute and the manager of the unit of the company Y that works directly with the Institute in Curitiba were interviewed. In case 3, from Plan, the manager of the program's unit in Teresina and the manager of gender and political incidence were interviewed. At SMPM, the municipal secretary, the manager of violence against women, the articulation manager, and the executive secretary (undersecretary) were interviewed. Finally, from case 4, from TETO Brasil, the former manager and the current manager of the Paraná headquarters were interviewed, and from the Public Defender's Office of Paraná, the public defender in charge was interviewed. Table 1 details the interviews conducted, with information about the case studied (cases 1 to 4), the organization studied, the code of the person interviewed (column 2), the duration of the interview (in minutes), and the number of transcribed pages.

Table 1 Details about the interviews conducted

Cases	Organizations Studied (Codes)	Duration	Number of transcribed pages
1	ASID (A1)	50"46'	13
	ASID (A2)	39"18'	10
	Firm X (E1)	40"17'	10
	Firm X (E2)	22"37'	6
2	Bosch Institute (B1)	54"10'	11
	Firm Y (F1)	28"53'	7
3	PLAN (P1)	62"49'	16
	PLAN (P2)	50"37'	12
	SMPM (S1)	80"18'	16
	SMPM (S2)	31"38'	9
	SMPM (S3)	51"58'	9
	SMPM (S4)	47"11'	10
4	TETO (T1)	44"10'	10
	TETO (T2)	51"12'	12
	DPPR (D1)	36"21'	8

Data analysis was performed according to the categorical content analysis defined by

Bardin (2016), and the Atlas ti 8 software was used to help mainly in the data coding. The codes were established *a priori* and referred to the components of the dimensions of the model of Alves, Segatto, & De-Carli (2016) already presented in the theoretical framework. Furthermore, *a posteriori*, the codes 'leadership', 'bureaucracy', 'partnership objectives', and 'actions already taken' emerged to help identify relevant information.

Finally, to assist in methodological rigor, a tying matrix (Telles, 2001) was elaborated, and a case study protocol (Creswell, 2010) was followed. At the time of data collection, the study center where the research was conducted did not require studies in the applied social area to be evaluated by the Research Ethics Committee. For this reason, the research does not have this approval. Nevertheless, all participants signed an Informed Consent Form (ICF).

4 RESULTS

The data were presented by dimension and components of the Relational Capabilities (which are the categories of analysis for the study). For each of the five dimensions (and their seventeen components), the data related to each of the four cases studied were presented. At the end of each dimension, a summary table was prepared to facilitate understanding of the data presented. The information from these tables was used to prepare Figures 2, 3, and 4. Finally, the empirical results were analyzed and compared with theoretical findings.

4.1 COORDINATION DIMENSION

In this dimension, three analyzed components were formalized actions, integration and synergy, and benefits of coordination. The alliances between CSOs and firms (cases 1 and 2) had formalized actions. Internal structuring, sectors, and specific positions facilitated partnerships. Moreover, the pre-established work methodologies of both CSOs were adapted according to each alliance. Another demonstration of formalized actions was existing contracts (case 1) and agreements (case 2).

The alliances between CSOs and public institutions (cases 3 and 4) did not have contracts or any other document formalizing the partnership between the organizations. Case 3 had internal CSO guidelines related to process standardization. However, in case 4, a difficulty was identified due to the bureaucracy imposed by the public institution to permit the formalization of the partnership.

The coordination and communication components were correlated since contracts and agreements specify the frequency of contacts and meetings that must exist between the organizations. Cases 1 and 3 correlated formalized actions with trust and close relationships. For case 2, they were associated with technical routines, because the contracts allow the transfer of technological knowledge.

In relation to the integration and synergy component, all the studied alliances emphasized the importance of the partnership to achieve their own organizational objectives of social impact and obtained benefits from the coordination. However, for case 1, this component is also perceived as good communication between partners and the strengthening of relationships by the feeling of belonging to the same team and the realization of joint projects. In case 2, integration allows the evaluation of partnerships, and in case 3, integration is relevant because the difference in speed of action and bureaucracy facilitates the development of projects.

The studied alliances pointed to the following coordination benefits: access to knowledge and the use of partner's resources. For cases 3 and 4, the following benefits

were also mentioned: more people reached, the increased visibility provided by the alliance, and the CSOs' access to the communities. The benefits of coordination for case 1 were access to financial resources and the jobs made available by the partner to insert people with disabilities into the job market. Table 2 presents a summary of the information found in the coordination dimension.

Table 2 Summary of the information found in the coordination dimension

Coordination dimension components	In all studied cases	Cases 1 and 2	Cases 3 and 4
Formalized actions	-	Present, associated with communication.	Only occurred individually.
Integration and synergy	Facilitated the organization to reach its goals. Assisted in the benefits of coordination.	Associated with trust.	Occurred through the complementarity of the work. Assisted in common values and culture.
Benefits of coordination	Access to the partner's resources, resulting from obtained knowledge.	-	-

Once the results of the coordination dimension and its three components (formalized actions, integration and synergy, and benefits of coordination) have been presented, the next section presents the cultural dimension.

4.2 CULTURAL DIMENSION

In this dimension, four components analyzed were trust, cultural diversity, norms of behavior, and common values and culture. In all four cases, trust was present and developed from previous experiences and results. The relevance of constant communication (cases 3 and 4) and face-to-face meetings were also highlighted, as well as transparency, even when the results were not satisfactory. The partnership time (case 2) was also highlighted as important for developing trust.

The existence of cultural diversities was emphasized. Case 1 highlighted a difference in working time. However, with negotiations, these differences did not generate conflicts because a consensus was reached. Thus, cultural diversity was recognized in all cases but did not lead to any conflicts. The common values and culture, especially about the social objective, were fundamental to this.

Similarly, norms of behavior did not cause conflict either. This is because the partners were flexible to adapt to overcome possible behavioral barriers. In addition, the experiences of working together over time helped the organizations to adjust their behaviors for the sake of the relationship. Table 3 presents a summary of the information found in the cultural dimension.

Table 3 Summary of the information found in the cultural dimension

Cultural dimension components	In all studied cases	Cases 1 and 2	Cases 3 and 4
Trust	Stemmed from previous experiences and achieved results.	Aided by formalized actions and rewards and incentives.	Aided by communication, knowledge acquisition, and perception of technical

			capability.
Cultural diversity	Did not generate conflicts.		Assisted in knowledge acquisition.
Common values and culture		Cultural diversity did not generate conflicts.	
Norms of behavior	Did not generate conflicts.		

Once the results of the cultural dimension and its four components (trust, cultural diversity, norms of behavior, and common values and culture) have been presented, the next section moves on to the presentation of the knowledge dimension.

4.3 KNOWLEDGE DIMENSION

The three components analyzed in this dimension were knowledge acquisition, communication, and rewards and incentives. Knowledge acquisition occurred with joint activities and actions when managers exchange experiences and learning. Thus, the internalization of knowledge happened by employees and volunteers, sometimes being documented and stored. The managers of the CSO in case 1 stated that they sought to retain employees as much as possible. Case 3 attempted to describe the learnings in reports and to hold internal meetings to discuss the acquired knowledge. However, some knowledge cannot be passed on. This was evident when the manager of the CSO in case 2 stated that some projects depend on the partner's employees to take place.

Communication could be formal and informal, recurrently, and whenever necessary. The main forms were not innovative: email, telephone, face-to-face meetings, and WhatsApp. Furthermore, communication could be used to generate trust in the partner by being transparent and constant. Moreover, the good relationship between managers impacted the communication between the organizations.

Regarding the rewards and incentives component, in case 1, the managers stated the personal satisfaction of employees involved in the social actions. In case 2, the importance of the partnership for innovations to occur was emphasized, including the generation of new services and products. For the cases between CSOs and public institutions, the greater ability to reach the target audience was one of the biggest incentives for the partnership. In addition, case 3 highlighted the political effect provided by the partnership since the proximity to the government facilitates the cooperation to pass laws and regulations that transform the proposed changes related to the social cause into lasting and high-impact ones. In all cases, the organizations involved perceived knowledge as one of the greatest Rewards and incentives of the relationship. Table 4 presents a summary of the information found in the knowledge dimension.

Table 4 Summary of the information found in the knowledge dimension

Knowledge dimension components	In all studied cases	Cases 1 and 2	Cases 3 and 4
Knowledge acquisition	Stemmed from previous experiences and was a part of rewards and incentives.		
Communication	Used many types.	Had evaluative aspects of the projects. Assisted in changes and solutions.	Generated trust. Informal.

Rewards and incentives	Associated with knowledge acquisition.	Benefits of coordination.	Greater reach of the target audience.
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Once the results of the knowledge dimension and its three components (knowledge acquisition, communication, and rewards and incentives) have been presented, the next section moves on to the presentation of the technological dimension.

4.3 TECHNOLOGICAL DIMENSION

In this dimension, three components analyzed were technical routines, collaborative innovations, and technology transfer. The cases involving CSOs and firms presented technical routines for the pre-established routine of formalized actions, monitoring, control, and evaluation of the results obtained. Furthermore, the technical routine of communication was established internally between CSOs and firms. In the cases of alliances between CSOs and public institutions, the results are quite different. Case 3 had previous planning of the projects carried out every year and the responsibilities of each. However, case 4 had a routine, as the partnership only occurs when one of the organizations needs the support of the other, and was usually to deal with urgent matters.

The leaders were fundamental in all cases for the good development of joint innovations. In addition, trust was fundamental for collaborative innovation to exist, and, in case 1, knowing how to negotiate and be flexible were also highlighted as important. In case 2, the relevance of having similar perspectives about what innovation entails and how this can be done was highlighted. In case 3, incremental innovations occurred when adaptations were needed, especially at the planning stage, so projects continued functioning properly. However, in case 4, collaborative innovations were not performed.

The technology transferred between organizations involved primarily their knowledge. Moreover, all cases highlighted this transfer as the main perceived benefit. Table 5 presents a summary of the information found in the technological dimension.

Table 5 Summary of the information found in the technological dimension

Technological dimension components	In all studied cases	Cases 1 and 2	Cases 3 and 4
Technical routines		Part of the evaluation and associated with the formalized actions.	
Collaborative innovations		Trust is required.	
Technology transfer	Through knowledge acquisition. An important benefit of the alliance.		Part of the Rewards and incentives. Allows the achievement of the alliance's goals. They had complementary technical capabilities.

Once the results of the technological dimension and its three components (technical routines, collaborative innovation, and technology transfer) are presented, the next section presents the last dimension, the co-adaptation one.

4.5 COADAPTATION DIMENSION

In this dimension, four components were analyzed: previous experiences, changes and solutions, close relationships, and evaluations. Knowledge is transferred between organizations during the stages of preparation and joint action in projects as the organizations work together and gain experience. Moreover, the experience of the organizations in working together strengthens the trust between the partners over a long period as positive results are achieved.

Flexibility and resilience (in cases 1 and 2) were fundamental to change and solutions. They were essential to overcome adversity throughout the partnership. Moreover, in case 1, these changes were important to the formalized actions not being perceived by the partnership as bureaucratic. In case 4, a conflict between the parties was highlighted about the existence of openness for changes and solutions. Some interviewees confirmed the existence of flexibility, while others disagreed. However, cultural diversity hindered the existence of changes and solutions, especially regarding the bureaucracy of the public organization and the inflexibility of the CSO.

In case 1, the close relationship with the partner was mainly sought by the CSO through constant and transparent communication and building of trust. In cases 2 and 3, a close relationship was sought by holding and participating in joint events, in addition to communication. Thus, the cases highlight the importance of the relationship between managers and employees. They had contacts whenever possible at events and get-togethers. However, in case 4, the conversations aimed to solve immediate problems and not build a close relationship between the organizations.

Partnership evaluations were conducted annually in cases involving CSOs and firms. They were considered routine for the alliance. Furthermore, partner satisfaction and project impact evaluations could be done according to the organizations' needs. In case 2, the manager responsible for the partnership at the CSO also evaluated the employees sent by the company to work on the projects since they worked daily with them, demonstrating the integration and synergy between the organizations. Differently, in case 3, the evaluation always occurred at the end of the actions, both internally and to receive feedback from partners and other project participants. In case 4, the evaluation of the partnership did not happen systematically, only through general analyses of the organization's performance. Table 6 presents a summary of the information found in the coadaptation dimension.

Table 6 Summary of the information found in the coadaptation dimensionel

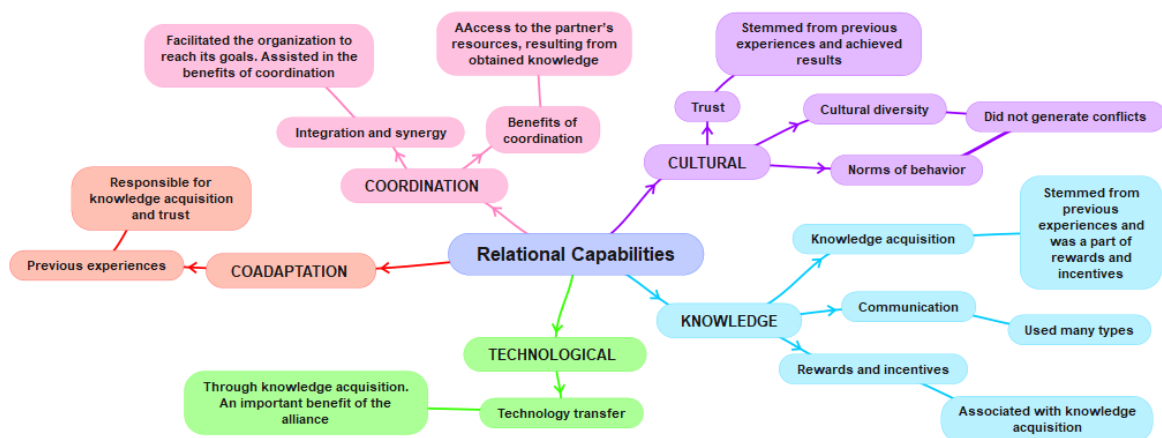
Coadaptation dimension components	In all studied cases	Cases 1 and 2	Cases 3 and 4
Previous experiences	Responsible for knowledge acquisition and trust.		
Changes and solutions		Required flexibility and communication. Meeting standards of behavior.	
Close relationships			Depended on how managers relate to each other.
Evaluation		Part of the technical routines and formalized actions.	

Once the results of the coadaptation dimension and its four components (previous experiences, changes and solutions, close relationships, and evaluations) have been presented, the presentation of the results concludes with five tables (2 to 6) summarizing the information collected. We move on to the discussion section of the results, with a comparison of the empirical and theoretical findings. To this end, three figures have been prepared to highlight the similarities among all the cases and between two kinds of cases.

5 DISCUSSION

Analyzing what was previously discussed, based on the texts and especially on the Tables (2 to 6) in section four, Figure 2 was prepared to highlight the similarities of the components of the dimensions of Relational Capabilities in the two types of alliances studied. To obtain this image, data was collected in column 1 (components of the dimensions of Relational Capabilities) and column 2 (in all cases).

Figure 2 Similar components in the dimensions of Relational Capabilities in the two types of alliances studied



The information presented in Figure 2 indicates that some components (or characteristics) of Relational Capabilities were necessary to focus on for all types of social alliances to be successful and lasting. These components were the search for 'Integration and synergy', for 'benefits of coordination', and for 'Rewards and incentives'; the generation of 'Trust', forms of 'Communication', and 'Previous experiences'; and 'Technology transfer', which in the cases studied was linked to 'Knowledge acquisition'. In addition, existing 'Cultural diversity' and 'norms of behavior' did not prove detrimental to the studied partnerships.

In the studied social alliances, power asymmetry or difficulty in integration and synergy between the participating organizations was not highlighted, corroborating Tsarenko and Simpson (2017). The genuine interest of the partner organizations in the cause that they worked together on was essential for these difficulties not to be identified (Lyes Palakshappa, & Bulmer, 2016).

Regarding the benefits of coordination, the empirical findings also corroborate Tsarenko and Simpson (2017), as the authors pointed out the advantages to partners when resource exchanges go beyond financial resources (such as volunteer work by partner organization employees and management mentoring). CSOs can benefit from companies' business knowledge, as mentioned by Berger et al. (2004) and Liu and Ko (2011), and the knowledge of the CSOs about the social problems faced by the target

audience of the social alliance is a benefit to the partner organizations (Sakarya et al., 2012).

None of the cases presented a lack of trust, which is considered one of the main problems that can arise in a cooperation, as highlighted by several authors (Álvarez-González et al., 2017; Andrews & Entwistle, 2010; Jamali, Yianni, & Abdallah, 2011; Sanzo et al., 2015; Tsarenko & Simpson, 2017). Furthermore, our study corroborated with the authors Álvarez-González et al. (2017) and Sanzo et al. (2015), who highlighted the professionalism of the organizations as necessary to overcome possible difficulties in the alliance because the perception of the partner's professionalism eliminated any trust issues.

When addressing the communication component, the main forms of communication used by the studied alliances were not innovative, as described by Fu, Cooper, and Shumate (2019). Moreover, the cases also corroborated Simpson, Lefroy, and Tsarenko (2011) and Gillett et al. (2019) in showing that good relationships between managers impact communication between organizations.

Regarding rewards and incentives, the cases showed that while social alliances with firms perceive the possibilities of innovation and employee satisfaction as the main points to be highlighted, for social alliances with public organizations, the possibility of serving more people is the main incentive. This corroborates Austin and Seitanidi (2012) and Hussler and Payaud (2019), who state that social alliances increase the political influence of organizations and are a motivator for creating alliances. Thus, the benefits of the relationship are clear to the organizations, countering Andrews and Entwistle (2010), who stated that relevant advantages are difficult in partnerships between organizations in different sectors.

Furthermore, all cases highlighted knowledge acquisition as the main motivator for the social alliance. Knowledge acquisition from the partner occurred and was one of the main benefits perceived by the participants. However, this knowledge was restricted to employees and not disseminated or formalized within the organizations. In this sense, knowledge is proper to the social capital of an organization (Jamali, Yianni, & Abdallah, 2011).

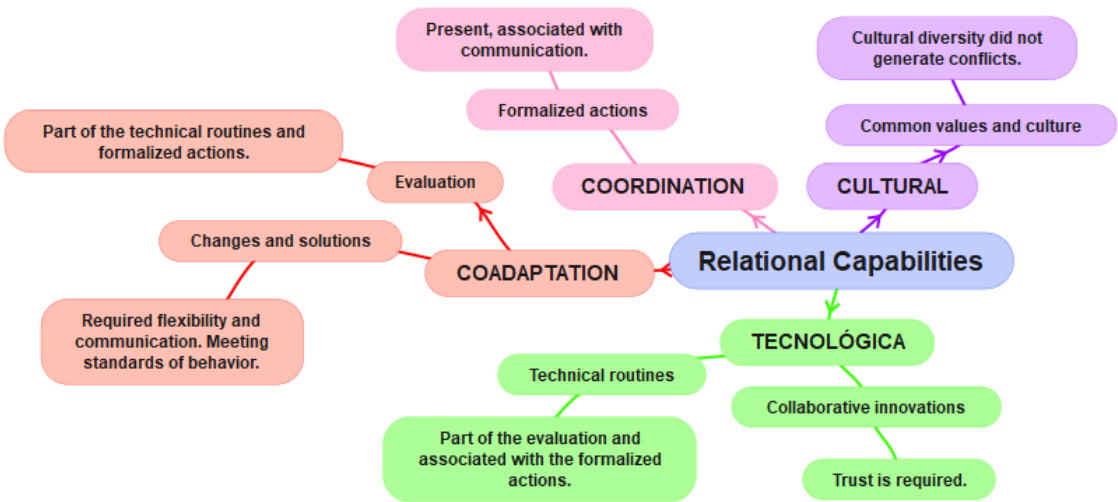
In all cases, technology transfer, here being knowledge, was one of the main rewards noted in alliances (Barroso-Méndez, Galera-Casquet, & Valero-Amaro, 2015). Thus, in the cases analyzed, the organizations possessed the ability highlighted by Jamali, Yianni, Abdallah (2011) and Tsarenko and Simpson (2017), to identify the complementarity between their resources and especially their technical knowledge, so that they can then achieve the objective of the alliance.

Even presenting several corroborations with the theory, one of the most significant findings was the counterpoint to Andrews and Entwistle (2010). The authors state that the advantages of working with organizations in the same industry may outweigh those of allying with organizations in different industries. However, the empirical findings of this research identified cultural differences in the cases analyzed, which were pointed out as sources of important learning that would not be possible with similar organizations.

Another important finding that differentiated the case studies from the theoretical evidence concerned norms of behavior. Possible behavioral barriers found in the literature, such as growth ambition, bureaucracy (Gillett et al., 2019), and ideological distance (Simpson, Lefroy, & Tsarenko, 2011) from the cause advocated by the social alliance, were not found in the cases. This is because the organizations studied had a vision of maintaining the alliance in the long term, which favored the intention to negotiate and arrive at common norms of behavior.

In addition to the components (or characteristics) of the Relational Capabilities required in all types of social alliances for their success and permanence, this research also identified (and is shown in Figure 3) similarities found only in the social alliances between CSOs and firms (cases 1 and 2). To obtain this picture, we compiled the data in column 1 (components of the dimensions of Relational Capabilities) and column 3 (cases 1 and 2).

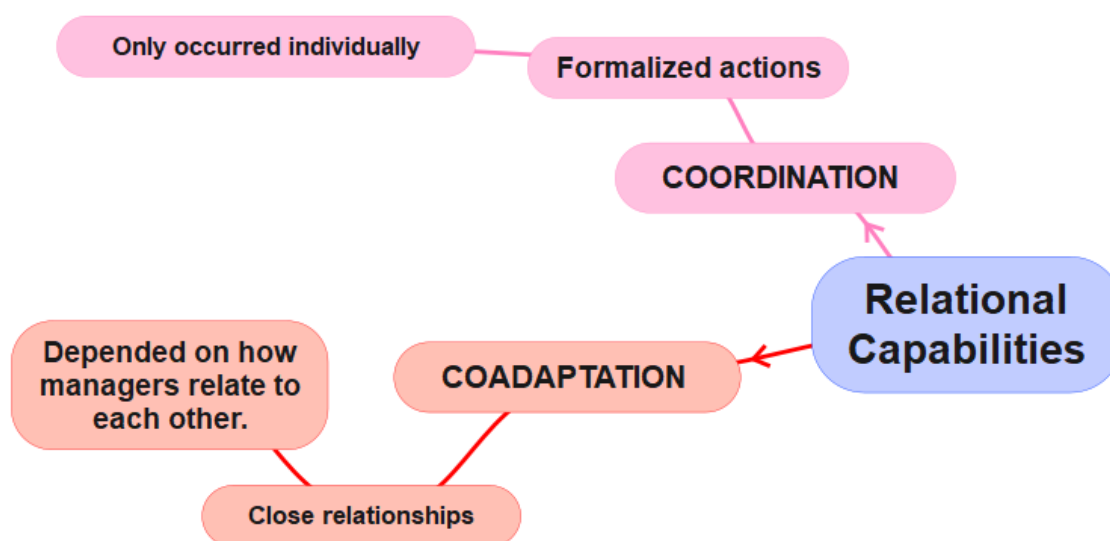
Figure 3 Similarities found in the Social Alliance between CSOs and firms



The information presented in Figure 3 indicates that some components (or characteristics) of Relational Capabilities are necessary only for social alliances between CSOs and firms to pursue their success and permanence. They are Formalized actions, Common values and culture, Technical routines, Collaborative innovations, Evaluations, and Changes and solutions. A discussion of the findings is presented later in the text.

In addition to the components (or characteristics) of Relational Capabilities needed only in the social alliances between CSOs and firms (cases 1 and 2), this research also identified (and is shown in Figure 4) the similarities found only in the social alliances between CSOs and public institutions (cases 3 and 4). To obtain such a picture, the data in column 1 (components of the dimensions of Relational Capabilities) and column 4 (cases 3 and 4) were collected.

Figure 4 Similarities found in the Social Alliance between CSOs and public institutions (cases 3 and 4)



With the information presented in Figure 4, we can infer that some components (or characteristics) of Relational Capabilities are necessary for social alliances between CSOs and firms in the search for their success and permanence. These are (absence of) formalized actions and close relations.

Among the distinctions between the types of social alliances studied, we realized that for alliances between CSOs and firms, the establishment of Technical Routines is necessary for the generation of Collaborative Innovations. In addition, the partners must have Common values and culture, be able to make Changes and solutions, and always carry out Evaluations of their activities. In alliances between CSOs and public institutions, the need for Close relationships prevailed.

Ngugi, Johnsen and Erdélyi (2010) state the relevance of technical routines involving shared technical systems. The cases involving CSOs and firms had routines for evaluating the projects and the partnership, with pre-established and formalized routines for monitoring, controlling, and evaluating the results obtained. However, the cases involving public organizations did not corroborate Walters and Anagnostopoulos (2012), who state that evaluation should be an ongoing process, evaluating not only the project, but also the partnership.

Collaborative innovation contributes to closer relationships between organizations and increased commitment to the partnership. For collaborative innovation, cases involving CSOs and firms highlighted the importance of trust between organizations, shared understanding about the goal of innovation, and flexibility in negotiating the details of the project so that the results please both parties. Furthermore, the importance of leaders throughout the process was emphasized, as cited previously by Ihm and Shumate (2019).

The cases highlighted that the flexibility for changes and solutions to occur was a fundamental characteristic so that the behavioral standards do not upset any of the organizations and harm the development of the alliance. Even though standard procedures have been established for a relationship with the partner and the execution of projects, changes should be possible whenever necessary for the good of the partnership.

As defined by Simpson, Lefroy and Tsarenko (2011) and Gillett et al. (2019), the close relationship with the partner was sought in the case studies, as its importance for the continuity of the partnership was understood. However, the demand for this closeness was different among the actors, meeting what was said by Alves, Segatt and De-Carli (2016) and Costa (2018) about the equality of interest in closer relationships. Once again,

case 4 stood out in relation to the others, because the search for a close relationship with the partner did not occur continuously as in the other social alliances studied.

Corroborating Ihm and Shumate (2019) and Hesse, Kreutzer and Diehl (2019), regarding the importance of leaders' characteristics in the social alliance, in all four cases, these managers were highlighted as fundamental for the good development of the partnership and joint innovations. In the studied cases, flexibility existed and helped the organizations to be closer and able to innovate jointly, as stated by Gillett et al. (2019) and Yang et al. (2018)

Finally, a very expressive distinction stands out for alliances between CSOs and firms; Formalized Actions were needed to ensure the correct progress of the project in the long run. However, for alliances between CSOs and public institutions, this component did not prove to be a necessary criterion to guarantee the success of the partnerships. The presence of formalized actions (necessary only in the social alliance between CSOs and firms) is advantageous for the studied alliances because, according to Tseng (2016), they help to avoid problems, such as the difficulty in checking the results of the partnership, the partner's contribution to the relationship, and the possibility of giving information in an undesired way to the partner.

Contrasting the findings of the literature, cases 3 and 4 did not point to the realization of Formalized Actions in the partnership. Although Jang et al. (2015) stated that social alliances are usually informal, this is not in line with what is defined by Cheng (2018), who highlights the importance of partnership between government institutions and CSOs having a formal agreement that describes the responsibilities of each.

The empirical findings agreed with Kim, Sung, and Lee (2012), who pointed out the importance of alignment between the mission of the CSO and the company. The cases analyzed also reinforced the view of other authors who stated the relevance of shared values between the organizations for the alliance to be effective (Barroso-Méndez et al., 2016; Lee & Rim, 2016).

6 CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this article was to analyze differences and similarities in the development of Relational Capabilities in different types of Brazilian social alliances. The theoretical contribution of this article is the model by Alves, Segatto and De-Carli (2016) in the reality of social alliances. Thus, applying the model to a new object of analysis allows verification of its application in this new context and suggests refinements to the model to increase its accuracy about reality. In this sense, leadership must be emphasized in the model. However, the practical contribution indicates that managers should identify the most relevant Relational Capabilities for the success of the social alliance and how the components of the model's dimensions may impact each other. This practical contribution is exemplified by the similar information presented in this study.

Similarities were found among all the social alliances studied. Integration and synergy facilitate the organization to reach its objectives and increase the benefits of coordination. Among the benefits of coordination is access to the partner's resources and knowledge acquisition. Technology transfer occurs through knowledge acquisition (which in turn derives from previous experiences) and is one of the rewards of the alliance. Trust also derives from previous experiences and is built as results are achieved. Communication occurs in several ways, and the cultural diversity and existing norms of behavior do not generate conflicts.

Among the differences perceived between the types of alliances, formalized actions

stand out. The alliances between CSOs and firms are formalized by contracts because the organizations perceive their importance in managing the partnership. The alliances between CSOs and public institutions, however, act informally with only intra-organizational planning. Another distinction is that in the social alliance between CSOs and firms, common values and culture, technical routines, collaborative innovation, evaluations, and changes and solutions are needed to adapt to the partner's reality. All of these are important to maintain the relationship between the organizations in the long term because they facilitate their aligned expectations and trust.

Although the close relationship component proved more relevant for alliances between CSOs and public institutions, it remained relevant in all cases. The proximity between partner organizations depends on the approach of managers throughout the development of the alliance because the level of communication, with greater or lesser contact, affects how close the relationship is. In addition, the interpersonal closeness between the managers involved is favorable for maintaining the closeness between the partner organizations.

Another relevant finding of the research contradicts the literature regarding three components: Cultural diversity, Behavioral norms, and Rewards and incentives. Contrary to what might be expected by the distinct institutional logic, cultural differences, norms, and behaviors were not characterized as major obstacles in partnerships. The complementarity between the knowledge of the organizations was characterized as the main incentive to develop the relationship. Another counterpoint to the literature is the lack of formalization of partnerships involving CSOs and public organizations, with case 4 standing out for its emergency character.

The main limitations of the study is the impossibility of generalizing the findings considering the small number of alliances analyzed, even though this is a characteristic aspect of case studies. Furthermore, the data collection coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, making it impossible to use direct observation for data collection.

Future studies may include the search for information about the Relational Capabilities in partnerships with the different employees of the organization to have an even more comprehensive perspective of the phenomenon studied. Studies that analyze specific types of organizations, which are classified by sector, size, level of professionalism, and interest in the same social impact (or target audience), could also be beneficial to ensure greater comparability. Thus, the results of this research could be compared with these future studies to help identify whether the model of Alves, Segatto and De-Carli (2016) can be integrally used in social alliances or should undergo some kind of specific change.

Among the methodological alterations in future studies, we highlight using different data collection forms, such as direct observation and interviews. With sufficient expansion and deepening of the studies, quantitative procedures may ascertain the connections found in the present work to analyze whether they are generalizable to other social alliances.

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