

Geografia em Comunidade: social entrepreneurship, university extension and innovative pedagogic initiatives in Diamantina, Minas Gerais state, Brazil

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Abstract

In the past decade, projects articulating university extension, social entrepreneurship and critical training of teachers in undergraduate courses have brought new perspectives for education and for local development policies. Since 2013, the project Geografia em Comunidade (Geography within Communities), developed in the Cidade Nova neighborhood (Diamantina-MG) by professors and students from UFVJM, has creating a new generation of social entrepreneurs in education, who are focused on school improvement, collaborative learning and local development. This study provides a critical review of the literature on university extension practices and social entrepreneurship in education, exploring possible contributions to collaborative learning in the teacher training process. In addition, this study presents a reflexive analysis on the Geografia em Comunidade project between 2013 and 2017 by taking into account local spatial, demographic and socioeconomic contexts. Project activities are described within a schematic model elaborated by the authors that synthesizes the possibilities of integration among university, school, public power and private sector. The study demonstrates that the Geografia em Comunidade project has an enormous potential for replication by inspiring other projects.

Key-words: social entrepreneurship; university extension; collaborative learning, teacher training.

Resumo:

Na última década, projetos capazes de articular extensão universitária e empreendedorismo social com a formação crítica de professores em cursos de licenciatura, notadamente, vêm trazendo novas perspectivas para os campos da educação e das políticas de desenvolvimento local. O projeto Geografia em Comunidade, desenvolvido no bairro Cidade Nova (Diamantina-MG) a partir de 2013 por docentes e estudantes do curso de Licenciatura em Geografia da UFVJM, visa a formação de uma geração de empreendedores sociais na educação, com foco na melhoria do ambiente escolar, na aprendizagem colaborativa e no desenvolvimento local. Inicialmente, o presente estudo expõe uma revisão crítica da literatura acerca do desenvolvimento de práticas de extensão universitária e de empreendedorismo social na educação, explorando as possíveis contribuições para a aprendizagem colaborativa no processo de formação de professores. Mais adiante, as principais atividades implementadas pelo Geografia em Comunidade entre 2013 e 2017 são analisadas de maneira reflexiva tendo como pano de fundo o contexto espacial, demográfico e socioeconômico do bairro e da cidade. As atividades do projeto são situadas dentro de um modelo esquemático elaborado pelos autores que sintetizam as possibilidades de integração entre universidade, escola, poder público e setor privado. O trabalho demonstra que o Geografia em Comunidade deve ser tratado como um case de sucesso com enorme potencial para ser replicado ou, também, inspirar outros projetos do gênero.

Palavras-Chave: empreendedorismo social; extensão universitária; aprendizagem colaborativa.

Introduction

Innovative approaches integrating “social entrepreneurship”, “university extension” and “collaborative learning” have grown in academic literature and educational policies in the past decade. In Brazil, projects articulating university extension, social entrepreneurship and critical training of teachers in undergraduate courses, notably, have brought new perspectives for education and for local development policies (SILVA; OLIVEIRA, 2009; SANTOS et al., 2012; FERNANDES et al., 2012). The proliferation of these projects has been driven by the dissemination of new communication technologies (PETTER; SAMBRANO, 2016), and by the growing social needs in Brazil (SILVA, 2010; HUSSAIN et al., 2012). In this context, consistent theoretical and empirical efforts might provide substantial contributions to the design of extension projects based on social entrepreneurship involving undergraduate courses in Brazil (WEERAWARDENA; MORT, 2006).

The project called “Geografia em Comunidade” (Geography within Communities), developed since 2013 by the Federal University of the Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys (UFVJM), has promoted innovative pedagogic proposals articulating social entrepreneurship, university extension and community participation in Diamantina, Minas Gerais, Brazil. The actions are focused on a neighborhood called “Cidade Nova” (New City), located in Diamantina’s suburbs. Based on a partnership involving university, school, public power and private sector, this project seeks to train a generation of social entrepreneurs in education by focusing on the improvement of the school environment, as well as on collaborative learning and local development initiatives. This project is undoubtedly a local case of success which has a great potential for replication by inspiring other similar initiatives.

First, we present a critical review of the literature on university extension and social entrepreneurship in education, exploring the possible contributions for collaborative learning in the teacher’s training. The following section provides a brief characterization of the study area focusing on the Cidade Nova neighborhood, as well as on the local public school. Next, we critically explore the main actions developed by the Geografia em Comunidade project between 2013 and 2017. As part of this topic, we present a schematic model that synthesizes a set of possibilities of integration between university, school, public power and the private sector. Finally, we explore the main skills developed by the project members during the implemented actions.

This study is based on the following research questions: 1) How are individual and collective social entrepreneurship initiatives articulated to university extension and to innovative collaborative learning pedagogical practices? 2) What are the main challenges and opportunities to adopting social entrepreneurship practices in education by involving partnerships between the university and school? 3) How does the Geografia em Comunidade project influence pedagogical initiatives of collaborative learning by articulating social entrepreneurship, university extension and community participation in education? What are the main skills developed by the participants? 4) What are the main contributions of this project on new social entrepreneurship initiatives in education?

Studies exploring “social entrepreneurship in education” are expanding in literature and requires development of a coherent and systematized framework (WEERAWARDENA; MORT, 2006). During the past decade, this topic has achieved greater recognition by social scientists and policy makers concerned about development and education issues. (DOBELE, 2016). The growth of such theoretical frameworks and empirical studies are vital, given the great potential of social entrepreneurship practices on education improvement and local development (SHAW; CARTER, 2007; BRAGA, 2013).

Literature defines “social entrepreneurship” as a process involving initiatives that seek a set of sustainable solutions to social issues (DRUCKER, 1987; CERTO; MILLER, 2008; NORUZI et al., 2010; LUKE; CHU, 2014). It is often a voluntary activity involving social goals that, in the strict sense, combines entrepreneurship expertise with non-profit actions (THOMPSON, 2002; SEKLIUCKIENE; KISIELIUS, 2015). According to Dees and Gregory (1998), social entrepreneurship is based on five basic characteristics: innovation, social values, new opportunities, high sense of responsibility, and overcoming limits.

Initially, social entrepreneurship actions were born in enterprises and corporations. In the corporative world, the growth of social entrepreneurship practices is associated with transformations in the capitalism, given the increased value of profit associated with positive social changes and the financial rewards directed to companies that supports social initiatives (NICHOLLS, 2006; YUJUICO, 2008; ZAHRA, 2009). Certainly, complex structural social problems generated by the capitalism in developing societies will not be solved through social entrepreneurship solutions alone (PORTER, 2012). However, it is undeniable that social entrepreneurship initiatives, when replicated often, are able to generate positive impacts at the local and regional levels.

In the past decade, social entrepreneurship practices have spread throughout non-corporative environments, especially in universities, schools, community associations, social movements and local councils (NORUZI et al. 2010). Individuals and small teams seeking the resolution of local issues are able to promote social entrepreneurship initiatives by bringing relevant local outcomes (TAN et al., 2005). Social entrepreneurs are often using the new tools available on the internet, such as Crowdfunding and social media, in order to raise money and to engage people (BURLEY, 2009; RAHMAN; SMITH, 2014).

Based on quantitative analyses, Braga (2013) explores the main motivations for social entrepreneurship engagement. This research reveals that the altruism, the passion, the example of influential people, past volunteer experiences and creative impulses strongly motivate people to engage in social entrepreneurship practices. Braga (2013) also notes that these motivations could change over the time, given the complexity of the actions. In contrast, this research also demonstrated that bureaucracies, as well as issues in raising financial and human resources, are the main obstacles to social entrepreneurship initiatives (BRAGA, 2013).

In literature, many terms associate entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship with education, especially “entrepreneurial education”, “entrepreneurship in education”, “educational entrepreneurship” and “social entrepreneurship in education” (Chart 1). Despite these terms being notably distinct, the first three terms are associated with the development of skills that, given the necessary stimulus, might contribute to the social entrepreneurship growth in education.

Chart 1 – Main terms in literature that associate education, entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial Education	Entrepreneurial education might be offered during all educational levels (high school, undergraduate and graduate courses), providing to the student some knowledge, skills and motivations by seeking disseminate the entrepreneurship practices (European Commission, et al. 2016).
Entrepreneurship in education	This term is used as a synonym of entrepreneurial education, highlighting the relevance of the entrepreneurship skills to the corporative world, such as the development of attitude, basic skills and knowledge on innovation and business (NORWAY, 2009).
Education Entrepreneurship	This expression refers to the adoption of innovative practices in the teacher's performance at school, seeking to stablish a relational model between teachers and students during the teaching and learning process (GUIMARÃES; LIMA, 2016).
Social Entrepreneurship in education	This term refers to the development of innovative proposals bring positive impacts on education. The social entrepreneurship in education also refers to the formative process of social entrepreneurs in schools and universities (DUARTE, 2010).

Source: (European Commission, et al. 2016; NORWAY, 2009; GUIMARÃES; LIMA, 2016; DUARTE, 2010)

Incorporating social entrepreneurship activities in education allows the development of dynamic approaches highlighting individual and team values (PĂUNESCU et al. 2013; SARIKAYA; COSKUN, 2015). Considering a broader sense approach, social entrepreneurs in education do not need advanced business knowledge. Social entrepreneurship projects might raise naturally responding local social issues by incorporating only basic understanding about the topic. In addition, well-structured projects might achieve optimum results by increasing the probability of success (KURATKO, 2005). In this context, knowledge constructed within universities is vital to nurture collective proposals at the school and community environments. (LEKHANYA, 2015).

In undergraduate courses, social entrepreneurship is especially relevant for qualifying marginalized and low-income students from developing countries, such as Brazil (PACHE; CHOWDHURY, 2012; FONSECA et al., 2012). Disseminating social entrepreneurship practices within universities might foster innovative practices and knowledge production (ROPKE, 1998). Furthermore, recent studies associate social entrepreneurship initiatives with improvement in educational performance, as well as with the individual success of the undergraduate students (ERTURGUT; SOYSEKERCI, 2012).

In general, professors and undergraduate students may become involved in social entrepreneurship practices in order to develop initiatives addressing a range of concerns, such as economy, politics, environment, health, art and culture, education, poverty, sexuality and gender (SITUMORANGA; MIRZANTI, 2012). According to Erturgut e Soskice (2012), their main motivations are associated with the desire to establish permanent groups, share social environments, and involve in charitable actions.

Teaching training courses include important synergies that foster success practices of social entrepreneurship in education, such as: extension and inclusion of these courses in the schools located in the surrounding communities (LINHARES et al., 2014); existence of projects that supports teaching training (such as the PIBID, in Brazil) and internship activities (CANAN, 2012; MILANESI, 2012); and clear relevance of university extension projects developed by the teaching training courses (MANCHUR et al., 2013). Moreover, schools, especially public schools, also possess certain essential conditions needed for the success of social entrepreneurship initiatives,

especially its recognized ability to bring together local talents and potential partners.

Social entrepreneurship has been an important tool in assisting university extension initiatives to achieve relevant social outcomes at the local level. Brazilian universities have the mission to develop extension projects, according to the Article 207 of the National Constitution adopted in 1988. In the past decades, the method Brazilian universities address extension projects has changed significantly. According to Serrano (2012), university extension is not restricted to the provision of community services, courses and social actions. The author demonstrates that Brazilian universities now consider extension as a two-way link between university and society.

Based on social entrepreneurship, extension projects developed by teaching training courses are able to change teaching paradigms in schools (GUARDA; MOURA, 2016). These kinds of projects are particularly associated with teacher training, stimulating the critical thinking about social relations, environment issues and development aspects at the local level. (FREIRE, 2006; BRUNSTEIN et al., 2008). The university extension based on social entrepreneurship tools can promote collaborative learning by improving the interaction, negotiation and resolution skills of all participants, including undergraduate students (FERREIRA; SILVA, 2011; TORRES; IRALA, 2014; SILVA 2015; ROSELLI, 2016). Therefore, this combination (university extension, social entrepreneurship and collaborative learning) promotes an innovative educational environment in teaching training programs, stimulating professors and students to become critically involved in school's problems and community issues (CHITCHAROEN et al., 2015).

Characterization: the study area and local school

Our study area, the Cidade Nova neighborhood, lies in the main district of Diamantina, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil. This neighborhood has high levels of geographical vulnerability, given the following characteristics: a) it is part of a discontinuous peripheral zone; b) it is distant from the center and main sub-centers; c) there is a lack of relevant commercial services within this neighborhood; d) there is only one access route, a bridge that connects this neighborhood to the MG 367 state road; and e) it is significantly surrounded by environment protected areas (Biribi State Park) (Figure 1).

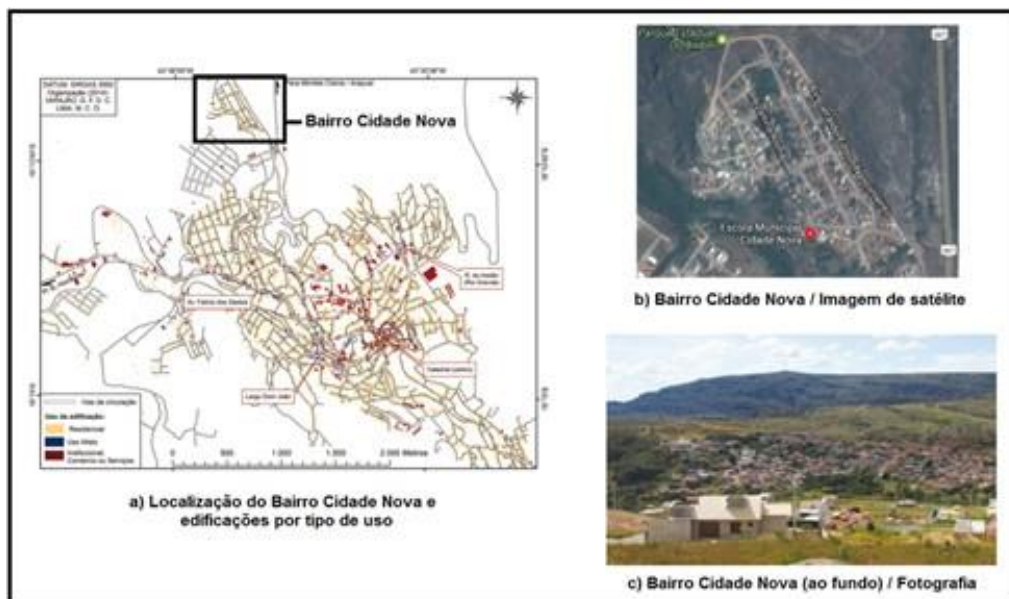
The Cidade Nova neighborhood is classified by the municipal zoning as a "special zone of social interest I", where the land irregularity and the lack of appropriated public spaces prevail. Although this neighborhood is predominantly residential, there are also community facilities. The Cidade Nova neighborhood includes a church, a center for the community council, a federal center for social assistance (CRAS), a state prison and, a local school, Jalira Lucchesi de Miranda.

According to IBGE (2010), the Cidade Nova neighborhood is divided into two census sectors (Figure 2). In 2010, the first census sector had 580 people and the second census sector had 820 residents (IBGE, 2010). In total, the neighborhood's 1,400 inhabitants account for 3.05% of Diamantina's population. This population consisted of 796 men and 604 women. The sex ratio registered in 2010 was 1.31 in this neighborhood, significantly above the municipal average (0.94). The census data also reveal a high average of people per household in the Cidade Nova neighborhood. In the first sector, households have, on average, 4.01 residents, while the second sectors present 4.08 on average (IBGE, 2010).

Figure 2 presents information on population age structure in both census sectors of Cidade Nova neighborhood. The graphics show a low percentage of elders and the predominance of teenagers and young adults. In general, the overall decrease in fertility observed in the country

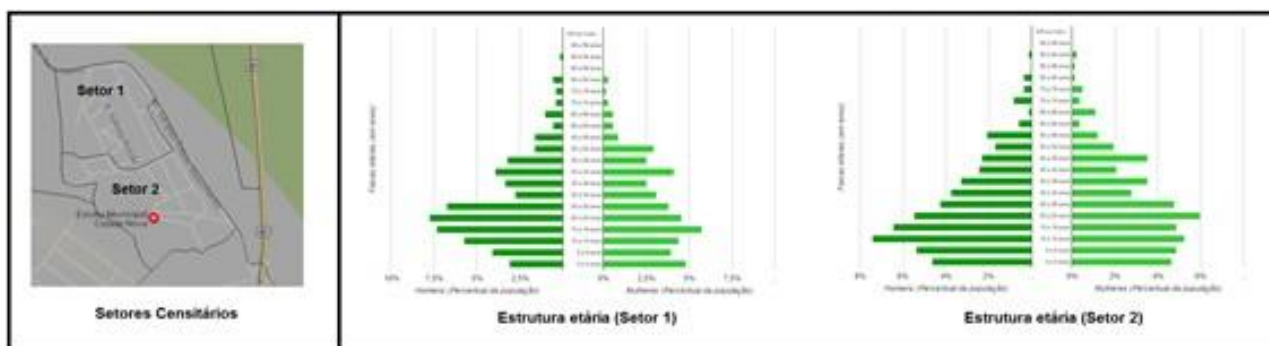
with the advancement of the demographic transition process (LEE, 2003; RIGOTTI, 2012, is also noted in the presented data. There is a lower percentage of children (0 to 4 years) compared to the previous generations. Although the female population with 0 to 4 years from the first census sector break this general rule because of the small sample, the quinquennial groups 5 to 9 and 10 to 14 are notably smaller than previous groups (15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years).

Figure 1. a) Study area localization, land use (residential, institutional, services and mixed use); b) satellite image of Cidade Nova; and c) study area picture, 2015-2017.



Source: Varajão et al. (2015), IBGE (2000), Leiva et al. (2015) e CNS (2017).

Figure 2 – Age structure of population in the census sectors, Cidade Nova neighborhood, Diamantina, Minas Gerais, Brazil, 2010*



Fonte: IBGE, 2010.

*Sector 1 (code IBGE 312160505000049) and sector 2 (code IBGE 312160505000035) are denominations crafted by the authors.

Table 1 presents information extracted from the 2010 census microdata (IBGE, 2010) on people with 10 years or older classified by wage groups in the study area. In both sectors, most of the population age 10 year or over earn between 1/2 to 1 minimal wage, totaling 492 inhabitants in the neighborhood. The number of people without any income is significant (536 inhabitants) because of the observed young age structure. According to Table 1, there are 90 people earning less than a 1/2 minimal wage. In total, 1,118 people above age 10 have no wage or have earnings lower than a 1/2 minimum wage, representing 90.82% of the neighborhood population (IBGE, 2010).

Table 1. People with 10 years or more classified by wage groups (in minimal salary) in 2010, Cidade Nova, Diamantina, Minas Gerais*

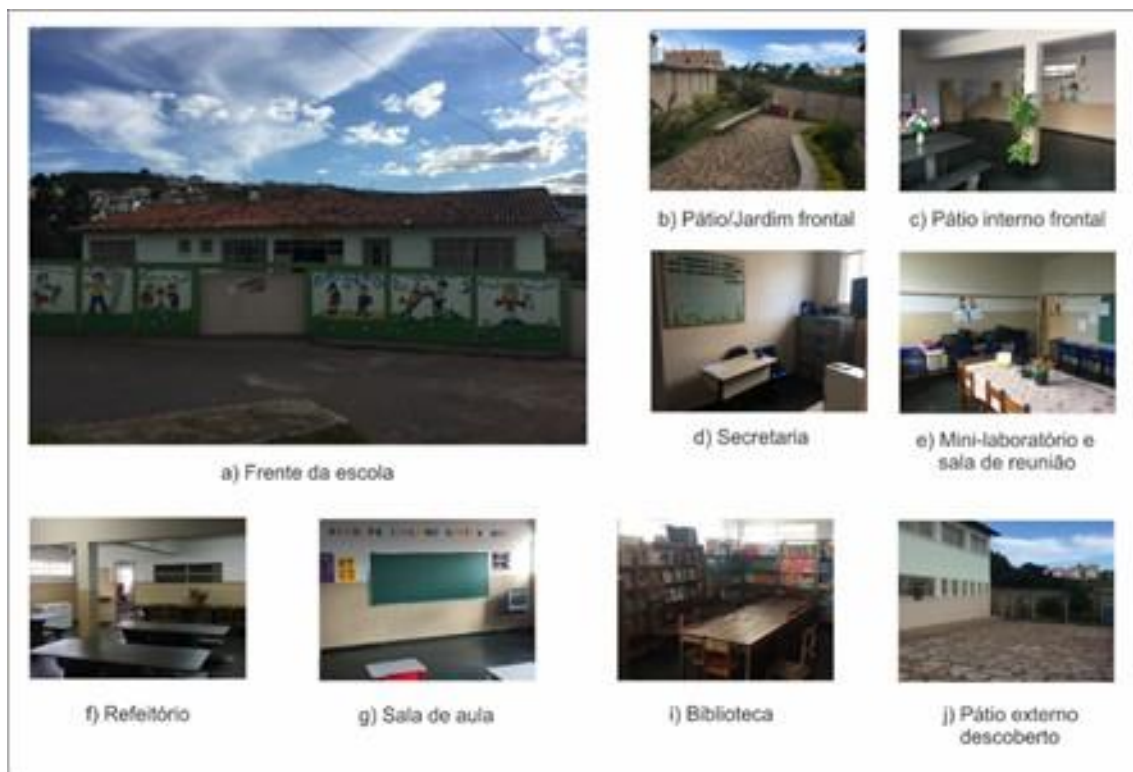
Setores Censitários	< 1/2	1/2 a 1	1 a 2	2 a 3	3 a 5	5 a 10	10 a 15	15 a 20	> 20	Sem Renda	Total
Setor 1	38	233	34	2	4	0	0	0	0	260	571
Setor 2	52	259	62	4	5	2	0	0	0	276	660
Total	90	492	96	6	9	2	0	0	0	536	1.231

Source: IBGE, 2010.

*Sector 1 (code IBGE 312160505000049) and sector 2 (code IBGE 312160505000035) are denominations created by authors.

The Jalira Lucchesi de Miranda local school (Figure 3), the main focus of the Geografia em Comunidade project actions, has 30 employees and 226 students from the basic education (3 to 5 years) and fundamental education I (6 to 11 years). In 2015, the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) of this school was 5.3, which was slightly higher than the established goal by the Ministry of Education for the basic and fundamental education, and slightly lower than the national average (5.5). According to IBGE (2015), this school has electricity, clean water and sewerage. The school also has a library, a small computer lab, the internet, seven classrooms, kitchen, bathrooms inside the building, secretary, shower, cafeteria and storage room. In addition, the school has an uncovered courtyard and no sports court (IBGE, 2015).

Figure 3 – Jalira Lucchesi de Miranda local school, Cidade Nova, Diamantina, Minas Gerais



Source: Geografia em Comunidade Project, 2017.

Geografia em comunidade: a case of success in Diamantina, Minas Gerais, Brazil

General introduction of Geografia em Comunidade projec

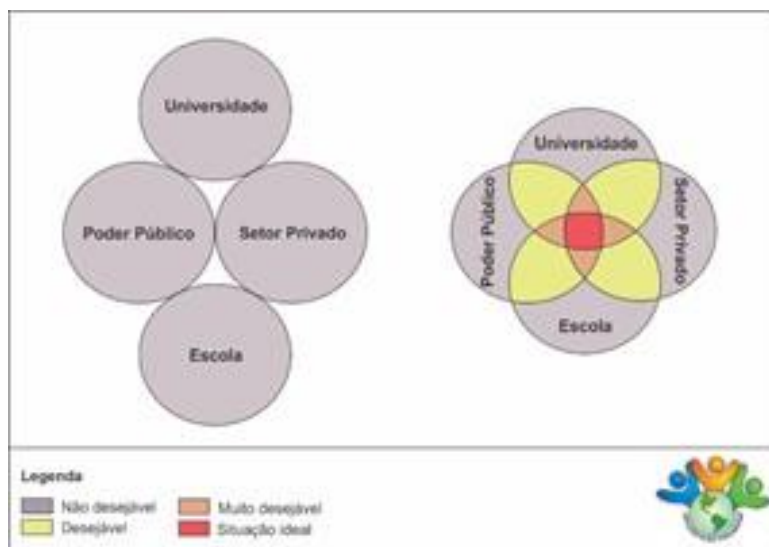
The Geografia em Comunidade project was developed by students engaged in the “Urban and Regional Planning” discipline at UFVJM, professors, teachers and community members. This college extension project sought social entrepreneurship initiatives in education and collaborative learning actions. The project’s actions are exclusively centered in the Cidade Nova neighborhood, especially in Jalira Lucchesi de Miranda. It sought to foster strategic social capital accumulated and significant interventional possibilities in this neighborhood. The Geografia em Comunidade is a multiyear course project, which enables continuity of the activities over time and changing undergraduate participants.

The Geografia em Comunidade is anchored on the social entrepreneurship pillars listed by Dees and Gregory (1998). The project seeks to develop innovative extension approaches, increase the sense of responsibility at school, disseminate social values by exploring the relationship between community and school, and bring solutions to the multiple problems associated with school’s environment within high social vulnerability areas.

The project places the college students at the focus of decision-making, encouraging the formation of leaderships and offering an “assisted freedom” to students as they considered the needs and interests of the community. Based on our experiences, actions achieve better results when the whole group participates actively in decision-making. Past studies also associate efficiency in community projects with decision-making involvement (MADAJEWICZ et al., 2014; LARSSON et al., 2007). In the Geografia em Comunidade project, the faculty coordinator provides the necessary basic knowledge on social entrepreneurship and university extension in education for new members, which allowed students to participate intensely in the decision-making process.

The project also aims to stimulate the local social entrepreneurship by increasing the UFVJM’s participation through university extension, as well as to decrease gaps between university, school, community, local authorities, and the private sector. Establishing bridges among these actors is essential for the project’s success. Figure 4 summarizes the articulation models among the main participants in the project, revealing different integration arrangements that support our actions.

Figure 4 – Articulation models among the main social actors (university, school, community, local authorities and the private sector) in Diamantina, Minas Gerais, Brazil



Source: Geografia em Comunidade project

The name of the project was chosen during the first meeting between representatives of the university and the community. This meeting took place in the Cidade Nova's community center in 2013. The name *Geografia em Comunidade* was suggested by a student and chosen by acclamation. The project's logo was created by the participants, and further digitized by a collaborator expert in design by using a free software (Figure 5). The logo is widely used in the social networks, in presentations and in our T-shirts.

Figure 5 – Building the project's logo, 2013.



Source: *Geografia em Comunidade* project (2013)

Furthermore, the *Geografia em Comunidade* project started organizing in 2013 a set of fieldworks to promote the integration between the project's members and community members. The project's team accessed interactive virtual platforms and census microdata to explore information on the general profile of the Cidade Nova residents, in addition to site visits. Data and information collected during these interactions have guided assessment of the main problems and challenges, as well as the main opportunities for successful interventions.

Our team identified several serious problems in the Cidade Nova neighborhood, including inadequate disposal of construction materials on the streets and sidewalks, poor access to the neighborhood via the old bridge, lack of adequate public spaces (squares), lack of paved streets, and degradation of water resources (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Fieldwork pictures in the Cidade Nova neighborhood, Diamantina, Minas Gerais, 2013.



Source: Geografia em Comunidade project (2013).

In the second semester of 2013, our team held a community workshop to discuss and consolidate the first assessment. This workshop took place in the Jalira Lucchesi de Miranda school by integrating the community, our team and people working on different extension projects at UFVJM, such as the PIBID Geografia project. The meeting was widely publicized in the neighborhood through posters and mouth-to-mouth initiatives. As a result, 25 residents and 10 children (4 to 7 years old) participated in the event, which is a significant number of people considering the well-known challenges of popular mobilization in the Brazilian poor communities.

The workshop took place at night, which allowed us to use all the school space and also enhanced opportunity for participation of working people. The lack of lighting in the school due to maintenance problems required a strong mobilization of the project members to make the workshop feasible. Improved school lighting was supported by local entrepreneurs and by the local authorities in response to this meeting, but left an important legacy for the school, which now is prepared for other nighttime activities.

At this workshop, our team developed a set of activities, including the preliminary presentation of the community general assessment. We assisted discussion promoted by our members on selected themes: education, health, social assistance, household market; infrastructure, environment and security. Our team also prepared a drawing project to encourage children's participation. Our members asked the children to draw what they felt were the main problems and also the positive aspects of their neighborhood. The pictures were exhibited in the school hall. In addition, the event incorporated some cultural activities, such as a folia de reis presentation, recital of local poetry, and musical presentation (Figure 7). At the end, all the information and suggestions presented during the discussion were consolidated by the audience and team.

Figure 7. Workshop pictures, Cidade Nova neighborhood, Diamantina, Minas Gerais state, Brazil, 2013.



Fonte: Geografia em Comunidade (2013).

Building the general assessment and organizing the workshop were essential to consolidate the insertion our members in the community's heart. These activities allowed us to accumulate important social capital in the neighborhood and in the school. In addition, these first activities have provided us a considerable amount of knowledge on the local social reality, which was vital to support our further interactions. The residents highlighted the need to build a new bridge with an appropriate path for pedestrians. Other main concerns presented by the school community included the lack of a sports court, an adequate covered yard, an identification sign at the school's entrance, and maintenance of the computer lab.

Based on our assessment and information collected during the community workshop, the project's team structured a set of short- and medium-term goals for actions between 2014 and 2017. We next highlight how the project addressed short-term actions, such as creation and hoisting of the sign in the main entrance of the school, organization and maintenance of the minilab, and class fieldwork in the nearby Biribiri State Park. In the medium-term, we highlight a set of initiatives seeking to involve authorities to construct a new bridge, as well as the initiative to build a new sport's area in a piece of land behind the school.

The production and placement of the sign above the main entrance of the school was extremely welcome as a way to reinforce the school's identity. Previously, only a few residents knew the school's name. We established a partnership with a local enterprise that printed the sign and paid for necessary materials. The sign's design was made by using the Corel Draw X5 (trial version) and incorporated opinions and participation of teachers and the principal (Figure 8). Furthermore, the Geografia em Comunidade project published an acknowledgment note in our social media in order to reward the local enterprise for its collaboration. According to previous studies, this kind of social gain to enterprises and other collaborators through social media is fundamental to reinforce partnerships with the private sector (RICO, 2004; CAMARGO, 2009).

Figure 8. New indicative sign in the main entrance of the Jalira Lucchesi de Miranda school, Cidade Nova neighborhood, Diamantina, Minas Gerais state, Brazil, 2014



Source: Geografia em Comunidade project (2014).

Next, the project's team worked on the organization and the maintenance of the computer lab during 2014. This room had suffered from a lack of computer supplies and computer maintenance, as well as accumulation of other types of materials inside the lab. Our team first cleaned and painted the lab room. The paint was donated by local entrepreneurs. In addition, the team identified needs to support lab, which guided a search for partnerships that could provide technical assistance and donation of supplies. A local computer sale and maintenance company became a partner of the project and the school, offering all the necessary support for the achievement of this activity (Figure 9).

This initiative enabled ongoing computer use for administrative purposes and for incorporating electronic activities in the teaching process in the local school. In fact, the pedagogic activities and the virtual interactions developed by using the new communication and information technologies are significant in educating the students, given unlimited possibilities of incorporate images, texts, sounds and animation (TIMBOÍBA et al., 2011).

Figure 9. Organization and maintenance of the computer lab in the Jalira Lucchesi de Miranda school, Cidade Nova neighborhood, Diamantina, Minas Gerais state, Brazil, 2014



Source: Geografia em Comunidade project (2014).

In 2015, the project's team has promoted educational fieldwork in the Biribiri State Park with students from the local school (Figure 10). This action was based on the educational activities designed by professors of UFVJM. SCALCO et al. (2013) identified a set of conflicts involving residents and park authorities given the new possibilities and restrictions concerning land use after the establishment of the state park. Therefore, these actions promoted by the Geografia em Comunidade project aimed to stimulate a harmonious conviviality between the community and the park, arousing interest in environmental preservation by promoting a deeper understanding of the local environment. Based on the collaborative learning spirit, our team, professors of the UFVJM, teachers and students from the local school have changed experiences and knowledge during the fieldwork. These actions did not require additional financial resources for its accomplishment.

Figure 10. Fieldwork in Biribiri state Park, Diamantina, Minas Gerais state, Brazil, 2015



Source: Geografia em Comunidade project (2015).

Medium-term goals for the project were more complex and usually required continuing efforts by the team and community. Most importantly, action to stimulate popular participation for supporting the construction of a new bridge started in 2014. We focused on creating mechanisms that bring the community closer to the local authorities, opening the dialogue on the subject and increasing community pressure on decision-makers. The old bridge was the only access to the neighborhood and had no pedestrian path. This main access to the neighborhood and to the Biribiri Park was extremely precarious, requiring urgent intervention (Figure 11).

Within the community, our team started sharing information about the main communication channels for the local public powers, such as the website, phone numbers and address. We collected 400 signatures and distributed flyers containing basic information about this initiative to all households. We delivered the signatures to the municipal mayor during a meeting that involved nine neighborhood residents and ten of the project's students and coordinator. Unified support was indicated through wearing our distinctive T-shirt. As a result of this meeting, the Mayor was committed to support the presented demand for a new bridge. Our team informed the community through flyers containing information describing the entire action. Information was also disseminated through social media, and the regional TV and newspaper. Local authorities began building the new bridge, which was finished in late 2016. This initiative demonstrated that small and continuously well-structured community participation actions are able to provide meaningful local results. Previous studies have shown that community participation at the local level should be a continuous practice (VALLA, 1998; ALBUQUERQUE, 2006). The Geografia em Comunidade project was able to stimulate local authorities to engage in attending a community's demand that required a significant amount of

financial resources. This initiative did not result in direct conflicts between residents and local authorities. Rather, the initiative explored a set of the collaboration possibilities involving the stakeholders by building connections and synergies to led to an agreement that the Mayor should support this demand. Local authorities in Diamantina were then very receptive, and the favorable context immensely contributed to the success of this initiative. Different contexts require different popular actions and approaches (GOHN, 2011).

Figure 11. Community action seeking the bridge renovation in the Cidade Nova neighborhood, Diamantina, Minas Gerais, 2014-2016



Source: Geografia em Comunidade project (2014).

Dissemination of our actions has been made by students involved in the project under the supervision of the coordinator through a variety of strategies. The basic principle is the widespread use of free social media and internet resources (LAWSON-BORDERS, 2003; WEIBKOPF E WITT, 2015). The main tool for publicizing the project is our Facebook page that currently has surpassed 700 followers. Facebook provides smart tools for the interaction of society with project members in a smart virtual environment (AL-MU'ANI et al., 2014). The dissemination of content aims to encourage social entrepreneurship in Diamantina and to offer a widescale recognition of all the private and public agents involved in the project activities. Our Facebook page also promote other projects, initiatives and cultural products generated by the community.

In addition, our actions and accomplishments have been shared on the site of the Laboratory of Urban / Regional Studies and of Pedagogical Practices (LAUR + / CeGEO / UFVJM). Local radio and television networks are also important disseminators of project actions. In addition, the project seeks to establish partnerships with students and teachers linked to programs developed at UFVJM's university radio, such as the Urban Planning in the Air program

(UFVJM). The constant use of t-shirts by team members is also important for publicizing the project, suggesting credibility and organization for the project's actions.

Figure 12. Interview for a local TV channel shared in our Facebook page and content shared by the UFVJM's local newspaper, 2014-2017.



Source: UFVJM local newspaper, nº 42, Jan/Set, 2014. Facebook (2017).

In terms of collaborative learning, Table 2 presents a list of skills developed by undergraduate students in each of the listed actions. In general, the ability to act and reflect, collectively, is present in most of the skills. The project considers the future teacher as an important transformative actor, not only in the classroom environment, but also in the whole school and in its community. In fact, expanding capacity for mobilizing resources and negotiating partnerships with the public sector are indispensable skills in regions of high social vulnerability (ROSENDAHL et al., 2012). Therefore, our actions seek to develop skills that will help, in the long term, in the creation of a local culture of social entrepreneurship in education with the inclusion of the "place" and local problems in the pedagogical practices of future teachers of geography.

Chart 2. Collaborative learning and developed skills in the project's actions, Diamantina, 2013-2017.

Project's actions	Developed Skills
Elaboration of the assessment and creation of a workshop on popular participation activities	Team work; involving partners; insertion in the community; expansion of the social network; field work techniques; organization of field reports; search for data and information in a virtual environment; systematization of data and information; analysis and interpretation of secondary data; fundamentals on demography and urban planning; foundations on popular participation; basic principles on the elaboration of workshops of popular participation, capture of the main demands of the residents.
Community participation to support the construction of a new bridge	Team work; involving stakeholders (university, community and city hall); organization of collection of signatures; capacity for community mobilization; fundamentals of urban planning; techniques of presentation of demands and negotiation.
Maintenance of the electrical network and school lighting	Evaluation of the general infrastructure of the school; team work; involving partners; negotiation techniques with the private sector (donation of lamps and reactors) and with the public power (provision of electrician of the city hall); assessment of the school's overall infrastructure; integration with the school environment.
Creation and installation of school's frontal sign	Evaluation of the general infrastructure of the school; Negotiation techniques with the private sector (plate donation); Basic fundamentals of graphic design and practice of Corel Draw; Learning Information and communication technologies resources.
Organization and maintenance of the computer lab	Negotiation and fundraising techniques with the private sector (donation of computer supplies and technical work); team work; involving partners; Learning information and communication technologies resources.
Fieldwork in Biribiri Park, Diamantina (MG)	Learning of methodologies for organizing and planning fieldwork and technical visits; learning about the environmental resources of the Biribiri park; team work; involving partners; adaptation of field activities to elementary school students.
Construction of a sport's field and the school yard coverage	Team work; involving partners; construction of basic field design for sports practices; techniques of negotiation and fundraising with the private sector (donation of financial resources for tractor contracting - leveling and cleaning of the site) and with the public power (provision engineer), organization of collection of signatures (construction of the coverage); capacity for community mobilization; fundamentals of urban planning.
Continuous dissemination of activities	Learning information and communication technologies resources; expansion of the social network of students in a virtual environment; techniques of oratory and presentation on radio and television environment.

Source: elaborated by authors.

Final Remarks

Our team believes that actions of social entrepreneurship, multiplied many times, are fundamental to spur a social change process by improving education through community participation. The activities developed between 2013 and 2017 have stimulated the expansion of social entrepreneurship and community participation in the learning process. It supports future teachers in addressing social problems and issues of interest to the school. The empowerment of individuals by considering the community as a whole is an ongoing goal of the project.

According to Dacin et al. (2010), bottom-up actions and social entrepreneurship initiatives are more likely to exist in places with socioeconomic, environmental and cultural problems. However, the project did not identify a wide dissemination of actions of this nature in the Cidade Nova neighborhood and, in general, in all Diamantina. The project demonstrates that, in fact, there is a promising environment for small structured actions of social entrepreneurship in education. However, the project also demonstrates that the university's role in this process was critical. Probably, actions of this nature would not be found in environments that are not in the direct sphere of influence of the University or other strong and empowered institutions.

In general, Diamantina's private sector, which is basically made up of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, has been offering positive responses to this project. The experience accumulated by the project suggests that there is a general awareness among local entrepreneurs of the importance and social role of the school. The project team identified three decisive factors for the success of local private sector participation in the proposed activities: 1) students and teachers of the project used their social capital for the mobilization of resources with entrepreneurs and companies; 2) a significant part of the children of small entrepreneurs of the city study in public schools; 3) local entrepreneurs have a strong sense of belonging within communities in Diamantina.

The activities demonstrate that there is a great potential to be explored in the expansion of dialogue between the community and public sector. The university as a mediator was critical to the success of meeting some key local demands. The project identified that neither the community nor the public power alone has adequate tools to promote a continuous opening of channels of popular participation and dialogue. The actions described by the project brought interesting results, although they are not capable of bringing a broad and sustainable solution to other issues of this nature.

Our actions have contributed significantly to the empowerment of students, teachers, and leadership in the school and in the community. In this project, students have critically dialogued with the local community through dynamic and socially relevant actions. The project confirms the centrality of the school to the growth of practices of social entrepreneurship through education and in the dissemination and perpetuation of this type of action at the local level. The public school provides a rich and promising environment for expansion of collaborative learning activities, contributing to the development of essential skills that assure autonomy and power of reflection for future teachers of geography.

Finally, the success of the project has created a viable alternative to address problems in the school environment and in the community. However, the scale of the problems observed in the education and teacher's training demands greater efforts from the entire society. Small projects of social entrepreneurship in education do not replace the demand for integrated initiatives among municipalities, state and federal Government, given the growing need for the general valorization of education in Brazil.

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