

**Impact Business Accelerators: how can they contribute to ANOTHER development? The construction of the innovative "Contratos Justos" fair contract's methodology.**

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**Abstract**

This research offers a critical reflection on the practices of impact business accelerators, also called social accelerators (SAs) within the sustainable investment landscape and discusses the role of SAs in fostering fair and sustainable economies. Adopting a constructivist approach, the study aligns with post-development theories, particularly the Transition Movement (TM) which is a reformist proposal that believes business can be part of the solution, strengthening the local economy, fostering collaboration among people and sustaining relationships with nature. The goal is to provide new insight into SAs and how we might conceive both the potential and limitations for local communities in Brazil to create a more resilient future. Underpinning this research is a commitment to realise the scope for SAs to effectively make a difference based on the concept of a "Contrato justo" (fair contract) to reduce asymmetries and build a fairer commercial relation, particularly with local communities in the Amazon. This concept is being developed through a collaborative, emergent approach and is based on three principles: (i) it is only fair if it is understandable, (ii) it is only fair if it reduces asymmetries and (iii) it is only fair if it helps to build a better social and environmental life. A provisional analytical framework based on the TM literature reframes the conceptual and situated challenges of introducing SAs to realise a more inclusive and egalitarian arrangement. In doing so, the "ANOTHER" development concept emphasises five dimensions: individual, collective, nature-related, local and time that help shed new light on the idea of SAs as a contested and negotiated set of practices.

**Keywords:** Social Accelerator. Transition Movement. Impact business. Post development theories.

**Goal of this Position Paper:** To share with a larger audience the main findings from Mrs. Souza's thesis research to date and to support further conversations, reflections and collaborations. As she is a visiting PhD student at Cardiff University, this paper aims to present the thesis's main topics translated to English.

## 1. Introduction

The prevailing development model, rooted in consumerism, anthropocentrism and industrialism has generated challenges for people and the planet. The relentless pursuit of economic growth has led to the over-exploitation of natural resources, triggering a severe climate crisis and exacerbated social inequalities, disproportionately impacting marginalised communities.

It is urgent to build alternatives for ANOTHER development. The writing of the word "another" in capital letters is to draw attention to the fact that this is an alternative to hegemonic development models. It conveys an idea of being and acting differently, uniquely and with other objectives.

Post-development theories present alternatives to the dominant development model by challenging traditional notions of progress and growth (KOTHARI *et al.*, 2019). These theories emphasise cultural diversity, local knowledge and sustainability, seeking to move beyond the Eurocentric linear trajectory of development. Rejecting the one-size-fits-all approach, post-development theorists advocate context-specific solutions and recognise the limitations of relentless industrialisation and globalisation.

One of the post-development approaches is the Transition Movement (TM) which presents alternatives to mainstream development that will be adopted as the theoretical position in this research (HOPKINS, 2011; HOPKINS, 2019; RASKIN *et al.*, 2002; MATOS, 2012; POWER, 2016). The post-development literature can be revolutionary in nature calling for radical changes or reformist advocating a pacifying position, with incremental and gradual changes to the current state of things (ACOSTA, 2012; GUDYNAS, 2011 *apud* FERREIRA; RAPOSO, 2017). TM is a reformist proposal that believes business can be part of the solution, strengthening the local economy, fostering collaboration among people and sustaining relationships with nature.

What TM aims to achieve is to inspire practical actions at the local level to address environmental, economic, and social threats with the ultimate goal of creating a positive and proactive response to the changes happening globally. Various strategies are possible for this purpose, such as: appropriate localization, resilience, low carbonization, community assets, natural limits, not purely for personal profit (HOPKINS, 2019).

The emergence of impact businesses and social business accelerators play a crucial role in addressing market failures by filling gaps where traditional markets fall short, particularly in addressing social and environmental challenges (BEATON; KENNEDY, 2021). These enterprises, often operating with a dual mission of financial sustainability and social environmental impact, leverage business principles to create positive change in society.

Social accelerators (SA), also called impact business accelerators<sup>1</sup>, have taken on an important role in the ecosystem of sustainable investments. These accelerators provide essential resources, mentorship, and financial support to initiatives striving for sustainability, contributing to change business practices toward a more equitable and environmentally conscious approach.

A seven-year international study (2013-2020) analysed over 360 acceleration programs and interviewed over 20,000 entrepreneurs globally, with a focus on developing economies, notably in Latin America and the Caribbean (32%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (25%) (DAVIDSON *et al.*, 2021). This study shows that acceleration programs are predominantly funded by non-profit organisations (43%), governments (22%) and private investors (16%). Also it showed that accelerators are typically small-scale, with an average of 2.5 full-time employees and with average program duration of 4 months. Accelerators operate in different sectors such as information technology, communication,

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<sup>1</sup> To better engage with international literature I adopt here the term "social accelerator," which is more common. In Brazil, however, I use the term "impact business accelerator" due to a decree addressing the topic.

healthcare, financial services, agriculture and renewable energy. Competitive selection of ventures is a common method, involving online applications and interviews with entrepreneurs that are made by the accelerators teams. While the majority of identified accelerators support social enterprises, the study primarily focuses on the commercial impacts of the programs, leaving open the question of how the social and environmental impacts are addressed by the accelerators and by the startups accelerated.

Studies on accelerators in Brazil analysed 35 acceleration programs in comparison to global data (GALI, 2019) and the effectiveness of 22 SA programs (MOVE, 2021). Brazilian SA aligns with the global profile. But unlike the global norm regarding the indicators for choosing startups, such as revenue; employee; equity, debt investment and philanthropy support Brazil values the presence of revenue and invested capital more (GALI, 2019).

The SA and impact businesses often present themselves as they are contributing to a more just, inclusive and sustainable world. However, evidence shows they are accelerating "business as usual", replicating and reproducing inequalities. For example, the majority of SA invest in businesses owned by white men from developed countries (HALLEN; COHEN; BINGHAM, 2020). Also mentors and investors are generally part of the network of the owner of the SA, accessing privileged information to co-invest (RADOJEVICH-KELLEY; HOFFMAN, 2012).

Contracts are one form of interaction between individuals and businesses that can either exacerbate inequalities or, conversely, serve as regulators for fair negotiations. In general, businesses accelerated by a SA need to enter into a contract with the accelerators and commit to generating positive social and environmental impacts in the affected communities. How these contracts are structured is a relevant topic. In this paper, some efforts involving the proposal of a new concept called "fair contracts" are presented. The aim is to establish a practical methodology for fair negotiations that can contribute to reducing asymmetries and generating positive impact. This methodology can be applicable to private negotiations and can be an important tool to a fairer transition.

The state in turn, either in regulatory function or in its development activity, also starts to create strategies related to impact businesses and intermediary organisations, as it is the case of accelerators. In Brazil, there is a relevant public policy called "Estratégia Nacional de Economia de Impacto" which means National Impact Economy Strategy (ENIMPACTO). One of ENIMPACTO's goals is to increase and support SA through a methodology that is already being used by innovative ventures by CERNE (Centre of Reference for Supporting New Ventures) that will be analysed in depth in the PHD.

The goal of the PHD thesis is to develop a critical analysis on the practices of SA, including the commercial negotiations that are formalised in contracts. The expected result to be built in collaboration with people linked to the theme is to be able to point alternatives to ANOTHER development, with more coherence and alignment between the practices of these accelerators with alternative development perspectives, mainly the TM approach.

This position paper has two objectives: a) to present an overview of the ongoing PHD research, including main findings and current challenges; b) to present and discuss the "Contrato Justo" (fair contract) proposal as a new concept that is essential to a fair transition.

It is structured as follows. First, I present Ethical Considerations as I am engaged with the subject of the research in different manners. Then, I declare my Ontology and Epistemology choices. Right after, I present the Research question and a summary of the literature review of SA and TM. Then, I present the Provisional analytical framework that was built from the TM literature, followed by the Methodology path, including the discussion of the innovative fair contracts project. I conclude with the Provisional Findings and expected results topic.

## 2. Ethical Considerations

Social accelerators are part of my professional life as an attorney specialised in Innovation, Impact Businesses, and ESG. I am a lawyer for some SAs in Brazil and I played a key role in establishing a significant SA in the Amazon, handling its legal issues. Additionally, I participate in the Brazilian Federal Government Committee established by ENIMPACTO, where I represent the Global Alliance of Impact Lawyers. My role involves contributing to public policy in the impact economy, with social accelerators being a crucial part of this.

To address potential conflicts of interest I declared to the FGV Ethics Committee my professional involvement in the same sector as the research participants. The committee accepted my proposed measures to declare and mitigate conflicts, ensuring client-lawyer confidentiality throughout the thesis project. If any client expresses interest in participating in the research, I will present the research objectives, obtain explicit consent for citation and consider their input. In my role at Global Alliance of Impact Lawyers, I've committed to ethical practices, respecting majority decisions and allowing dissenting opinions without hindering actions. Maintaining confidentiality within this commitment may lead to some information being withheld during the research.

While acknowledging the potential for conflicts, I believe that it is possible to participate in different spaces (law, government and academia) without compromising my dedication to a cause. I support organised civil societies, as they are an expression of democracy, and also I support impact businesses. While adopting a critical approach, I aim to contribute positively by aligning with the sector's preservation and fostering a constructive perspective.

Balancing knowledge, experiences and ethical considerations will be an ongoing effort, guided by criteria for evaluating qualitative research of a critical-interpretive nature (POZZEBON; PETRINI, 2013; HARARI et al., 2021). Ongoing reflections on biases in the thesis aim to ensure transparency and meet the criteria for a critical-interpretive qualitative research evaluation.

## 3. Ontology and Epistemology

This study adopts a constructivist epistemology with a critical approach and a relativist ontology (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The social realities and practices of impact business accelerators are social constructions shaped by the interpretations and interactions of diverse stakeholders. By adopting this perspective, the aim is to move beyond a singular and objective view of reality, recognising that participants' interpretations and power relations play a central role in meaning construction. The focus of this type of research is steering away from explanations for control found in positivism or post-positivism (GUBA; LINCOLN, 1994).

My critical approach involves scrutinising ideologies, questioning status quo premises and using theoretical frameworks beyond the orthodox, as outlined by Pozzebon and Petrini (2013). It implies a thorough analysis of the ideologies underpinning accelerator practices, questioning entrenched assumptions and exploring the social and economic implications of these dynamics. Rather than accepting practices as given, the research will seek to understand how these accelerators may reproduce or challenge existing power structures, influencing the development of impact businesses. Also, it aims to provoke reflections in order to build a more just development model.

Many constructivist studies are sensitive to power relations, while critical studies focus on the processes of social construction sustaining phenomena of interest (PHILIPS; HARDY, 2002 *apud* POZZEBON; PETRINI, 2013). The constructivist epistemology with a critical orientation was adopted to this research. The goal is to understand how the practices of impact business social accelerators influence the construction of an alternative model based on the TM framework that is being presented and on the concept of a fair contract model.

Furthermore, this epistemological choice seeks to address the gap in interpretative studies within the social accelerator literature largely guided by positivist research, contributing to the context in which social impact is understood. It may offer valuable insights into how accelerators

contribute to the construction of development alternatives and how such initiatives are perceived and shaped by the diverse actors involved.

#### 4. Research question and literature review

The research question is: “How can Social Accelerators contribute to ANOTHER development?”. The literature review rests primarily on two main groups: Social Accelerators and Transition Movements as one of the post-development alternatives .

##### 4.1 Social Accelerators

Accelerators - not just SA - are proliferating worldwide at a rapid pace and they have become an increasingly stable phenomenon, generating demand from startups seeking acceleration programs and attracting corporations and governments (BAGNOLI *et al.*, 2020). Accelerators are understood as initiatives that encompass a time-limited acceleration program (usually 3 to 6 months), targeted at early-stage startups, including mentoring support and public events for their pitch presentations (MILLER; BOUND, 2011; ISABELLE, 2013; COHEN; HOCHBERG, 2014 *apud* BAGNOLI *et al.*, 2020; HALLEN; BINGHAM; COHEN, 2020, p. 3). Despite this apparent alignment, 29 different accelerator concepts were identified, categorised into five types based on the type of financial and institutional support they receive: a) venture capital, b) government resources, c) corporate sponsorship, d) university support, and e) hybrid models of these sources (BAGNOLI *et al.*, 2020).

Usually, accelerators provide support for existing businesses seeking growth and resources, including access to investment rounds (RIBEIRO; PLONSKI; ORTEGA, 2015) and offer a package of mentorship and training. At times, they provide loans or acquire equity to become partners in the accelerated businesses. These programs are designed to expedite interactions with the market, aiming to help nascent businesses adapt quickly and learn (COHEN; HOCHBERG, 2014 *apud* RIBEIRO; PLONSKI; ORTEGA, 2015, p. 2).

There are limited studies on accelerators and even less focus on impact or social accelerators (ANDE; VILLAGE CAPITAL, 2013 *apud* LOUREIRO, 2014). Traditional accelerators do not necessarily label themselves as such. However, several aspects point to an understanding of accelerators aimed at a mainstream market, notably support for technology startups (KOMAREK; KNIGHT; KOTYS-SCHWARTZ, 2016; KANBACH *et al.*, 2016; HALLEN; BINGHAM; COHEN, 2013).

An example is that in a traditional acceleration program, investing in technology for software development can result in a prototype within three months. As warned by Pandey *et al.* (2017) and Dorado and Ventresca (2013), the same cannot be expected from a social investment in an impact business acceleration program, in which the objective is to deal with complex social problems. Differences between social and traditional accelerators can be summarised in the table below.

**Table 1** - Comparison between Services Offered and Received: Traditional vs. Impact Acceleration.

Accelerators	Social	Traditional
Selection process	Greater emphasis on entrepreneurial purpose	Greater emphasis on business
In-person engagement	More intense	Less intense
KPI's	Impact, financial and operational	Financial and operational
<b>Startups</b>		
Program focus	Greater emphasis on entrepreneurial purpose	Greater emphasis on business
KPI's construction	Takes more time	Takes less time

Class program	Importance of individual care	Greater relevance through networking
Relevance of services received	Mentoring and networking	

Source: (LADEIA, 2019).

There is a predominance of positivist studies that are concerned with verifying the effects of the SA phenomenon or validating measurement methods and tools while answering more pragmatic questions (FRANÇA, 2019). Consequently, there is a lack of more research that uses an interpretative lens when dealing with issues of social impact (DEERY et al., 2012; DOMÍNGUEZ-GÓMEZ, 2016; FREUDENBURG, 1986; HANNA et al., 2016 apud FRANÇA, 2019) and also a lack of alternative strategies and multimethods to discuss and analyse the social impact of initiatives beyond simple financial measures (AHMADVAND; KARAMI, 2009; OLSEN; CANAN; HENNESSY, 1985; SHERA; MATSUOKA, 1992; BECKER; SANDERS, 2006).

The assumption is that alternative strategies allow researchers to better navigate through the complexities of social reality and its inherent contexts. They can shed light on historical and political contexts, “especially for the angle on sustainable development” (FRANÇA, 2019, p. 58) to understand social investment as a “social space constructed with different investment logics and investor rationales at play” (NICHOLLS, 2010, p. 70). This thesis may help to fill this gap and also contribute to the correlation between accelerator practices and alternative development models that has hardly been explored.

In the literature review carried out, there are few critical studies that analyse how impact businesses are contributing to alignment with alternative development model practices. What comes closest to this debate is, on one hand, a vision of recognising the capacity of impact businesses/sustainable investments to change realities, increasing positive impact results (GREWAL; SERAFEIM, 2019; FRANÇA, 2019; MCGOEY, 2012; NICHOLLS, 2010; CALLAHAN, 2018; BATTISTELA et al., 2017; WENNEKERS; THURIK, 1999; BAUER *et al.*, 2016; HATHAWAY, 2016). On the other hand, a more critical view raises doubts as to whether an impact investment market shaped and led by self-regulated transnational corporations is capable, at scale, of meeting the financing needs of the transition to a more sustainable future (CALLAHAN, 2018).

#### 4.2 Post-development

The post-development literature is broad, quite diverse and can be identified as belonging to a solid theoretical field. It presents several criticisms of mainstream development (KOTHARI *et al.*, 2019). These offer alternatives to the different generations of development theory (AMARO, 2004 apud FERREIRA; RAPOSO, 2017). Among the generations of the predominant development model are the ideas that development would only happen through economic growth which, in turn, depends on industrialisation, capital accumulation and strong state intervention (AMARO, 2004; MEIER, 2005 apud FERREIRA; RAPOSO, 2017).

Due to its economic and productivist character, with a decisive link to economic growth based on Gross Domestic Product and per capita index, the concept of development is criticised for the harmful consequences it generates at different levels. For instance, at the social level with inequality, poverty, exclusion, unemployment. At the environmental level, with the climate crisis and destruction of species. On the cultural level with erasure of memories, cultures, intolerance. At the political level, submission of democracy and political decisions to economic and financial powers, among others (AMARO, 2017).

The post-development literature can be revolutionary in nature - calling for radical changes - or reformist believing in a pacifying position, with incremental and gradual changes to the current state of things (ACOSTA, 2012; GUDYNAS, 2011 apud FERREIRA; RAPOSO, 2017). There are different

approaches, whether inspired by the Global South, such as the *buen vivir*, post-extractivist, the visions of indigenous peoples and indigenous Brazilians, the African vision of Ubuntu or, even, by inspirations from the North, as is the case with the Degrowth paradigm, The Great Transition and the Commons Movement.

Post-development theories challenge, for example, the notion that nature is solely at the service of humanity, thereby questioning the belief that it can be exploited to meet human needs. Otherwise, nature has limits that economies should not exceed: there is the possibility of ecological catastrophe and an absolute saturation point (post-extractivism) (ACOSTA, 2016). There is an idea of community, of integration with nature, with the understanding that we are part of it and that there are beings and elements with equal rights that must be respected (ubuntu, indigenous vision) (BEAR, 2000). It is believed that a nature-friendly economic development (degrowth) or based on a natural economy (the great transition) is possible, which aims to safeguard limited resources, avoid further declines and rebuild already degraded resources (COOTE, 2010). TM is one of the dozen different alternative theories in existence.

#### 4.2.1 Transition Movements

There are several movements using the term "transition," including The Great Transition, Transition Town movement, Sustainability Transitions, Transitions Networks and the Transition Movement (FEOLA; JAWORSKA, 2018). These movements can have similarities, such as identifying the economy as the starting point, framing it within a socio-environmental system, and considering transitions from the bottom up (FEOLA; JAWORSKA, 2018). However, crucial differences exist in discourses regarding the role of the State, the degree of radical reform or innovation, imaginative aspects of sustainability visions and opposition to capitalism.

In general, TMs, mostly from the Global North, incorporate agendas often associated with the Global South, adopting ideas of social justice, climate and environmental justice, aligning with alter-globalisation movements (GENDRON, 2018). Despite having a term in common, these movements may align with vastly different perspectives. The term 'transition' implies temporal pressure for progress and, in some cases, irreversible change from one state to another (BROWN *et al.*, 2012).

TM was adopted as a theoretical position for this thesis as one of the post-developed alternatives. This choice was made because TM literature has more points of contact with the SA literature and with the dynamics identified in social impact acceleration programs in Brazil. Also, it has the advantage of delving deeper into one of the post-developing currents.

Yet, this theoretical positioning is not uncritical. Some elements within the TM seem underexplored, such as the lack of an intersectional perspective considering race, gender and social class. Representatives of the TM respond superficially to such critiques, recommending the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (BRANGWYN; HOPKINS, 2008).

Another critique relates to criticism of the movement's apolitical stance (SCOTT-CATO; HILLIER, 2010 *apud* POWER, 2016). This is because part of the TM indicates that one should not seek relationships with governments, nor expect support from the State because governments have a track record of non-compliance with many national and international agreements related to social and environmental issues (HOPKINS, 2011; VARGAS *et al.*, 2016).

Advancing discussions on this topic is deemed necessary, especially considering the Brazilian legal-political-institutional ecosystem of impact businesses: ENIMPACTO. This Brazilian legal framework aims to coordinate federal public administration bodies, private sector entities and civil society to promote an enabling environment to impact economy. The goals are: i) expand the supply of capital; ii) increase the quantity of impact businesses; iii) strengthen intermediary organisations; iv) promote an institutional and normative environment favourable to impact investments and businesses, and v) promote intergovernmental coordination with States and Municipalities in

fostering the impact economy. These elements, among others, may be subject to a literature review proposal within the TM.

## 5. Provisional analytical framework

This provisional analytical framework is based on the TM literature review. Five different dimensions were identified: individual, collective, local, nature and time as it is possible to see below.

**Table 2 - Provisional analytical framework from TM literature**

Individual dimension	
Principles	Concept
Practicing inner transition	"How" each individual treats him/herself, others and nature for transition is more important than "what" is being done. There is a belief that inner transformations of values, emotions and behavior for a more positive approach helps to shape the intrinsic motivation of each individual that is needed for a collective project (HOPKINS, 2019; POWER, 2016; VARGAS <i>et al.</i> , 2016).
Taking self-care	The idea of self-care is related to personal development through practices such as psychology, therapy and storytelling, aiming to inspire behaviours positively. It brings a new sense of identity to those who participate in the TM who acquiring a new way of living in the world (ALLOUN; ALEXANDER, 2014; HOPKINS, 2011; HOPKINS; HODGSON, 2010; VARGAS <i>et al.</i> , 2016).
Practicing personal resilience	Resilience is an important characteristic to cope with and respond to disturbances or adversity in a more positive way. Practices that can support resilience are religious, meditative, spiritual care, love, compassion, tolerance and the holistic approach "head, heart, hands" to find a balance among them to do Transition. (HOPKINS, 2011; BOUDINOT; LEVASSEUR, 2016; HAXELTINE; SEYFANG, 2009; KIEPURA, 2015; POWER, 2016).
Seeking well-being	People's pursuit of happiness, good living and social justice above economic growth values. Well-being is closely linked to discourses on happiness and positivity. The pursuit of personal profit is reconsidered and individuals are encouraged to engage in ethical and purposeful work. (GUDYNAS, 2011; FERNANDES; LIMA, 2020; MATOS, 2012; HOPKINS, 2019; MCGREGOR; CROWTHER, 2018; RASKIN <i>et al.</i> , 2002)

Source: The author

Collective dimension	
Principles	Concept
Collaborating with people	The idea strongly emphasised in the TM is the urgent need for collaborative action. It takes place within an open space system through exchanges, assistance, mutual support, training and capacity-building, particularly learning from seniors. The interaction spaces aim to inspire and mutually assist in achieving common TM goals. (POWER, 2016; MATTOS 2011; BRANGWYN; HOPKINS, 2008; HOPKINS, 2019)
Not waiting for the Government	Although there is some disagreement, what prevails is the idea that we should not expect support from a government that has a history of non-compliance with many national and international agreements related to social and environmental issues. Despite this, if there is any relationship with the public authorities, efforts should be made to cultivate positive relations. (BRANGWYN; HOPKINS, 2008; HOPKINS, 2011; VARGAS <i>et al.</i> , 2016).
Practicing community resilience	Community resilience aims to empower communities to withstand challenges, fostering a reimagining of the local economy to better address specific needs. It considers factors like diversity (biological, territorial, social and economic) to provide varied responses to problems, agile feedback in the face of global response delays. It also considers social capital to build trust



	and effective leadership, innovation through experimentation and locally developed solutions. (HOPKINS, 2011; WALKER; SALT, 2006, p. 145)
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Source: The author

Local dimension	
Principles	Concept
Strengthening local economy	The aim is for the community to have a more diverse local economy, including social enterprises and to own goods and wealth produced locally. For example, promoting local food production, generating renewable energy and developing other sustainable initiatives markets. This is considered a safer way to achieve sustainable balance between local trade and production. (POWER, 2016; HOPKINS, 2011; HODGE <i>apud</i> HOPKINS, 2011)
Valuing location to address problems	The location is valuable to solve problems and strengthen the local economy. It is helpful to reduce Global Dependency, aiming to create more self-sufficient and resilient economies. (HOPKINS, 2011; HOPKINS, 2019; RASKIN et al., 2002; MATOS, 2012; POWER, 2016)

Source: The author

Nature-related dimension	
Principles	Concept
Acknowledging the limits to natural resources exploration	The belief is that we no longer live in a world where natural resources and energy are infinite. Therefore, it is better to plan for degrowth than to risk a socio-economic collapse. A low-carbon economy should be pursued to mitigate the risk of Peak Oil and provide solutions for climate change. (HOPKINS, 2019, MATOS, 2012; VARGAS <i>et al</i> , 2016)
Respecting and protecting nature	A more harmonious and sustainable relationship with nature is claimed. Key aspects include respect for the environment, a focus on environmental sustainability, a connection with the land, biodiversity protection, environmental education and the development of sustainable local economies. (HOPKINS; LIPMAN, 2009; HOPKINS, 2019; MATOS, 2012; VARGAS <i>et al</i> , 2016; RASKIN <i>et al</i> , 2002)

Source: The author

Temporal dimension	
Principle	Concept
Remembering that changes take time	A long-term perspective is adopted. There is recognition that the necessary changes to build resilient and sustainable communities require time and ongoing effort. Additionally, transitions are not typically rapid events but gradual processes influenced by natural rhythms and seasons in the environment. It is important to respect the constraints imposed by time. (HOPKINS, 2019)

Source: The author

This provisional analytical framework is my theoretical tool to develop the thesis project. It will help to answer the research question: "How can Social Accelerators contribute to ANOTHER development?". It will be relevant to understand how each of these five dimensions is addressed by impact accelerators and also how it could be different.

Then, in the "discussion topic" of the thesis, given that the areas of intersection between TM and SA are limited, I understand the importance of fostering not only cross-fertilisation between them but also engaging in a dialogue with other kinds of literature (such as related to the traditional development model) and also studies that are made from other types of organisations than the

academy. There are at least three important sources of data related to the study of accelerators: GALI (Global Accelerator Learning Initiative)<sup>2</sup>, GAIA (Global Action Impact Accelerator)<sup>3</sup>, and MOVA<sup>4</sup>. These different backgrounds can cross-fertilize, they can absorb important issues brought from the field and, more importantly, they can provide a relevant tool to SA to rethink their practices.

The connection between different literatures can be done in the trading zones (BÉNATOÏL, 1999). Different perspectives can be brought together to increase the comprehension of a specific phenomenon. On one hand, the TM literature is theoretical and does not address peculiarities of business, much less social acceleration. On the other hand, SA literature is mostly empirical and does not offer theoretical insights. The possible cross-fertilisation between these literatures may enable a better understanding of the situation of the dynamics of the SA in the development model and to offer broader perspectives to find ideas to achieve a fairer system.

## 6. Methodology

The methodology adopted is collaborative research, marked by the appreciation of social participation in the research process that considers the goals of professional researchers as the vanguard of collective dynamics (BONNY, 2017). It stems from shared interests, shared values, and previous relationships of trust between researchers and practitioners (AUDOUX; GILLET, 2011 *apud* BONNY, 2017). There is a logic of articulation, connection, but not fusion, as defined by Centre de recherche sur les innovations sociales (BONNY, 2017).

In this concept of collaborative research, there is a significant distinction between researchers and practitioners. There is an active collaboration of these practitioners in the research process, but in different ways depending on the stages of the process (BONNY, 2017). Here, co-construction usually occurs at two main moments: the co-definition of the research object and what could be called its problematization, on one hand, and the discussion and dissemination of results, on the other (BONNY, 2017).

In this approach, the participation of practitioners is limited regarding the research itself and their collaboration is more to facilitate the researchers' work with access to information and people (BONNY, 2017). Hence, the connection between research and action is generally mediated, it occurs in another space\time, with a different configuration of actors, of which researchers may or may not be a part (BONNY, 2017).

To allow interaction with the empirical material, the spaces in which I participate directly due to my professional background as a lawyer and researcher in this field is being considered. In addition, documental analysis, individual and collective interviews, organisation and participation in events that allow interaction with people through a constructivist approach, will be carried out.

The main group of people who are interacting with this project are those who work for impact business accelerators and also impact socio-environmental entrepreneurs, public managers and people benefiting from accelerated business. All the study is focused on the Brazilian experience, but it is also open to identify tendencies from UK perspectives.

The unit of analysis is the experience of social accelerator programs by social accelerators. The experience encompasses: (i) the worldview regarding the role of social accelerators in addressing existing social and environmental issues; (ii) motivations for their connections with a Social Accelerator (whether as an accelerator startup or working in one); (iii) perceptions of individual, collective, local, nature and time dimensions in the dynamics of accelerators; (iv) perceptions regarding government action, such as ENIMPACTO, and; (iv) recommendations for SA improvement. This type of experience occurs in a specific context and territory, requiring a more comprehensive and integrative perspective on what this experience means in and for the realities and intentions of the individuals involved.

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<sup>2</sup> Available in: <https://www.galidata.org/>

<sup>3</sup> Available in: <https://worldmerit.org/gaia/>

<sup>4</sup> Available in: <https://mova.vc/produtosp2p>

Also, one specific case study that will be presented: the "Fair Contract Project Methodology" as it will be detailed below.

### **6.1 The innovative fair contracts project**

One of the aspects that is relevant to the commercial relationship is the legal aspects, such as the contract. Although there is literature and social movements engaged in climate, social justice, it is not seeing a "legal justice" approach. As this thesis project has the objective to identify possibilities to contribute to another way of doing business, I am bringing the experience of building a specific methodology to fair contracts between local communities and companies in the Amazon of Brazil. It is also being done because of my role leading the "Projeto Contratos Justos na Amazônia" (Fair Contracts in the Amazon Project) and my background in law.

This experience has been led by the law office at which I am also a partner, called Szazi, Bechara, Storto, Reicher and Figueiredo Lopes Advogados. More than 30 people were already interviewed and 10 case studies are being conducted on the Amazon region in Brazil. The goal of this ongoing methodology construction is to reduce the asymmetry with stakeholders that are at a commercial negotiation disadvantage. This is an opportunity to see another approach to the legal aspect of the commercial agreements in an impact business context.

The Contrato Justo ("fair contract") concept is based on three principles: a) it is only fair if it is understandable; b) it is only fair if it reduces asymmetries, and c) it is only fair if it helps to build a better social and environmental life. The concept of justice that guides this project is based on John Rawls' theory of justice in dialogue with his critics Enrique Dussel, Michael Sandel and Amartya Sen. It also contemplates indigenous cosmovision, as it will be presented in the thesis.

After all, when seeking to build an alternative model in society, it is expected to put forward a methodology to deal with fair contracts and identify changes that would help the dynamics established among businesses, accelerators and investors in order to cause a positive impact in society.

### **7. Provisional Findings and expected results**

There are two provisional findings. The first is a provisional analytical framework that has been made to amplify and re-interpret constructions of the TM literature reviewed. Five dimensions were identified: individual, collective, local, time and nature dimensions. The second is the "fair contract" proposal.

Regarding the outcomes, theoretical objectives involve filling a void in SA literature through the application of a constructivist and participatory approach. This study aims to forge connections between the SA literature and the TM, culminating in the creation of an analytical framework that integrates key elements from these disparate bodies of literature. Additionally, the research will contribute to the review of TM literature in the Global South.

On a methodological front, the study seeks to generate insights into collaborative research methodologies within a context marked by robust economic and commercial interests. The methodology under construction for fair contracts in the Amazon will be fortified, ensuring a more robust and effective research approach.

In practical terms, the study aspires to enhance commercial agreements between local communities and companies in the Amazon. Moreover, it endeavours to stimulate introspection among accelerators regarding their dynamics, encouraging contemplation of alternative development approaches. Additionally, contributions will be made to ENIMPACTO, the Brazilian Public Policy to social enterprises, including the creation of a database for the collaborative review of TM literature in the Global South.

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