

**FROM COMPLIANCE TO STRATEGIC CSR: RESOURCE RECONFIGURATION
IN A BRAZILIAN AGRIBUSINESS FIRM UNDER POLYCENTRIC PRESSURES**

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary organizations face increasingly complex challenges in global polycentric institutional environments, where multiple power centers interact to shape rules and norms that impact their operations (Ostrom, 2009). In addition, these multiple power centers sometimes compete to establish rules and norms, changing relevance as time passes, forcing firms to reorganize resources and capabilities to respond to this complexity and alternate rapidly.

At the intersection of the global scale and multifunctionality in sectors such as agriculture, these institutional pressures intensify due to the demands for sustainability, transparency, and innovation, essential for competitiveness in dynamic and global markets (Aligica et al., 2012; Husted & Sousa-Filho, 2017). Despite advancements in understanding organizational responses to such pressures (e.g., Marano et al., 2024), a gap remains in the literature regarding how firms prioritize resources and capabilities over time to address varied institutional demands.

However, while previous studies explore how companies respond to normative pressures in developed markets, there is limited understanding of the complexity of institutional interactions, particularly in the agricultural sector, which faces unique environmental, social, and economic demands (Khanra et al., 2022; Montiel et al., 2021) and where common resources are shared constantly, like water, air, and energy, reshaping the Tragedy of Commons introduced by Ostrom (2008). This gap is further emphasized by almost no multilevel approaches that capture the intersection between global governance and specific sectoral practices, such as sustainable agriculture.

In this context, this article investigates the research question: How do organizations respond to global polycentric institutional pressures by prioritizing resources and capabilities over time? Through a qualitative and process-based analysis grounded in the Resource-Based Theory (RBT), the study seeks to elucidate how firms develop and reconfigure resources to respond to the increasing demands for sustainable practices from polycentric power forces.

The research adopts a qualitative-descriptive approach, leveraging historical data, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis of relevant cases in the agricultural sector, focusing on the period from 2005 to 2023. This approach enables the identification of critical events that shaped the adoption of sustainable practices and strategies organizations employed to address polycentric pressures.

The findings contribute theoretically by connecting RBT with institutional polycentrism, demonstrating how companies reconfigure resources in response to multiple and simultaneous pressures that alternate power constantly. From a managerial perspective, the study offers insights into how firms can develop and combine resources and capabilities to meet institutional demands, ensuring global competitiveness and alignment with stakeholder expectations.

Nevertheless, while RBT remains a cornerstone of strategic management theory, its static assumptions—particularly when compared to perspectives like resource orchestration and dynamic capabilities—limit its applicability in dynamic and complex environments. To effectively address contemporary managerial challenges, especially within polycentric

and global institutional contexts, RBT needs integration with dynamic frameworks emphasizing resource evolution, adaptation, and strategic reconfiguration—a focus this paper aims to explore.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical foundation of this study is rooted in Resource-Based Theory (RBT), which provides a strategic lens to understand how firms develop, prioritize, and leverage resources to gain competitive advantage. While RBT focuses on the internal attributes of firms, the concept of Institutional Polycentrism is employed as a framework to analyze the external context of institutional pressures. Polycentric environments, characterized by multiple and often conflicting centers of influence, present dynamic challenges that compel firms to adapt their strategies. Within this interplay, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) emerges as a critical organizational response, enabling firms to navigate institutional demands while enhancing stakeholder trust and sustainability. This literature review integrates these perspectives, examining how RBT informs the development of resources, how polycentric institutional pressures shape the external environment, and how CSR serves as a strategic bridge between the two.

Resource-based Theory: Foundations, Relevance, and Criticisms

The Resource-Based Theory (RBT) is a foundational framework in strategic management that emphasizes the role of a firm's internal resources and capabilities in achieving and sustaining competitive advantage. Based on Barney's seminal work (1991), RBT posits that firms with resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and organized can outperform competitors. These resources can be tangible, such as physical assets, or intangible, including knowledge, reputation, and organizational processes (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984).

RBT has become a widely adopted lens for understanding how firms create value and maintain competitiveness (Barney et al., 2021). Its appeal lies in its focus on internal factors, offering a counterpoint to industry-centric perspectives like Porter's Five Forces (Porter, 1980). By highlighting the strategic importance of unique and inimitable resources, RBT has contributed to developing resource-based strategies, especially in dynamic industries where differentiation is critical.

RBT has its foundations in the Ricardian perspective, considering that detaining resources and capabilities is a sine qua non-condition to achieve competitive advantage (Peteraf, 1993). Then, the structure in which a firm composes its set of resources and capabilities represents a hierarchical construction of competitive advantage (Javidan, 1998). In this sense, managers must evaluate the resources and capabilities that support the necessary responses a firm must configure and reconfigure daily.

Despite its contributions, RBT has faced criticism for its inherent limitations, mainly its static nature. Critics argue that RBT focuses on resource attributes simultaneously, neglecting the dynamic processes through which resources are acquired, developed, and reconfigured (Priem & Butler, 2001). This static perspective restricts its ability to analyze the continuous evolution of organizational capabilities in response to changing external environments. For instance, firms operating in volatile and polycentric institutional environments often need to dynamically reconfigure their resources and capabilities to meet shifting regulatory, social, and environmental demands. According to them, RBT's framework struggles to capture such complexities effectively.

Moreover, RBT faces criticism for its limited guidance on how firms should prioritize and develop resources in practice. While it identifies the attributes of strategic resources, it offers minimal insights into the processes and managerial practices required to build and sustain them (Foss & Knudsen, 2003). This gap is particularly evident in emerging economies and industries characterized by institutional uncertainty, where the static assumptions of RBT may not align with the realities of resource acquisition and deployment.

In response to these criticisms, extensions of RBT, such as the Dynamic Capabilities Framework, have emerged to address its static limitations (Teece et al., 1997). This framework emphasizes the importance of organizational agility in sensing and seizing opportunities and transforming resources to sustain competitive advantage over time. However, these extensions are not without challenges, as they add layers of complexity that may complicate practical applications. Despite its relevance, dynamic capabilities are a response to the constantly changing, on a Schumpeterian perspective, instead, it is not a response to how a firm must prioritize the resources and capabilities it detains and cannot change rapidly, as is the case of Corporate Social Responsibility.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) encompasses various voluntary business practices that address social, environmental, and economic challenges beyond profit generation. These practices are designed to enhance the well-being of stakeholders, improve environmental sustainability, and contribute to societal development (Carroll, 1999; Yáñez-Araque et al., 2021). CSR has evolved from a peripheral concern to a strategic priority as companies increasingly recognize its potential to enhance reputation, foster innovation, and create long-term competitive advantages (Kramer & Porter, 2011).

Firms that effectively prioritize and allocate their resources over time to CSR initiatives tend to outperform their peers, especially in dynamic and competitive markets. This process of resource prioritization, rooted in the Resource-Based Theory (RBT), is crucial for addressing the multifaceted demands of stakeholders while simultaneously meeting the challenges posed by global polycentric institutional pressures. Organizations capable of hierarchizing their resources to align with these pressures achieve compliance and legitimacy and create pathways for sustained competitive advantage through differentiation and stakeholder trust (Khanra et al., 2022; Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014).

However, the ability to hierarchize resources for CSR over time requires a dynamic approach. Firms must continuously evaluate and reconfigure their resource portfolios to meet evolving institutional demands and stakeholder expectations. This approach is particularly relevant in global polycentric institutional contexts, where multiple centers of influence, such as governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), investors, and consumers, exert diverse and often competing pressures on firms (Aligica & Tarko, 2012; Ostrom, 2009).

The competitive advantage derived from CSR lies in its integration with the firm's strategic priorities. Companies that successfully align CSR initiatives with their core business objectives leverage their unique resources and capabilities to create shared value, benefiting the organization and society (Kramer & Porter, 2011). In this sense, the hierarchization of resources for CSR becomes a mechanism for compliance and a strategic tool for differentiation, innovation, and long-term sustainability.

Hence, CSR is not merely a set of ethical obligations but a strategic asset for firms that prioritize and allocate resources effectively over time. Adapting and aligning CSR practices with dynamic institutional environments enables firms to remain competitive, responsive, and resilient in the face of global challenges, especially where and when institutional polycentrism offers a high level of uncertainty.

Institutional Polycentrism

Institutional polycentrism, defined here as a governance system, emerges from multiple, independent power centers that interact to determine and regulate a comprehensive and evolving system of social rules (Batjargal et al., 2013) and is anchored in institutional theory. Polycentrism is an approach championed by the seminal ideas of Michael Polanyi (1963), as cited by Ostrom (1990). The polycentrism approach was later treated as a social system with many decision-making centers.

In pursuit of this direction, the conceptualization of institutions is central to understanding institutional logic and its application in organizational studies (Chaerki et al., 2019). On the economic approach, institutions instigate firms to respond to the context's prevailing norms and avoid sanctions (North, 1990; Scott, 2008). On the sociological approach, institutions force firms to build legitimacy that is aligned with their strategies (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Suchman, 2014). On the political approach, institutions are tools for power distribution, cooperation, and governance (Helmke & Levitsky, 2012; Ostrom, 1990; de Vasconcellos et al., 2024). All perspectives demand responses to independent centers of power that constantly force firms to reorganize and prioritize resources and capabilities (Langley et al., 2013).

Institutional polycentrism is a governance system characterized by multiple independent centers of power that interact to create, modify, and regulate societal rules evolutionarily and comprehensively (Aligica & Tarko, 2012; Ostrom, 2009). This concept emerged as a response to the complexity of modern institutional environments, where organizations operate under overlapping and sometimes conflicting norms, rules, and expectations from various stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, investors, and consumers.

The polycentric nature of institutions is especially relevant in globalized contexts, where regulatory frameworks and cultural norms vary significantly across regions (Garrido et al., 2021). Polycentrism challenges the traditional notion of centralized governance by emphasizing the adaptability and resilience provided by decentralized, multilevel systems of authority (Batjargal et al., 2013; McGinnis & Ostrom, 2012). Such systems allow for diverse perspectives and localized solutions, enabling organizations to navigate institutional pressures effectively.

The taxonomy of institutional polycentrism (Batjargal et al., 2013; McGinnis & Ostrom, 2012) is organized into four interrelated dimensions that explain how multiple centers of power shape the organizational environment. The multi-level dimension refers to the overlapping global governance systems involving international organizations, multinational corporations, and local entities. In the multi-purpose dimension, sectoral polycentrism highlights the interaction of different institutional logics within specific sectors, such as agricultural standards that must reconcile environmental sustainability and productive efficiency. Normative pressures represent the coexistence of formal regulations and informal norms, influencing organizational practices and are represented by the multi-sectoral dimension. The multi-functional dimension highlights temporal evolution and addresses the dynamic changes in institutional priorities over time, such as the growing global emphasis on carbon neutrality and renewable energy. This taxonomy

emphasizes that operating in polycentric environments necessitates organizations to possess strategic flexibility, continuous adaptability, and the capacity to coordinate resources in response to complex and evolving demands.

For organizations operating in global polycentric institutional environments, a multifaceted approach is required (Batjargal et al., 2013). Companies must navigate diverse regulatory and normative pressures while maintaining operational efficiency and strategic focus. The dynamic interplay between global and sectoral polycentrism often requires the reconfiguration of resources and capabilities to align with evolving demands. Institutional polycentrism also presents significant challenges, such as regulatory inconsistencies, conflicting stakeholder expectations, and resource allocation dilemmas. However, it also offers opportunities for innovation and collaboration (Garrido et al., 2021). Organizations that can effectively adapt to these complex institutional arrangements often gain a competitive advantage by demonstrating legitimacy, responsiveness, and resilience.

Therefore, institutional polycentrism provides a robust framework for understanding the interaction of diverse governance systems and their impact on organizations. The multidimensional nature of polycentrism offers a structured perspective for analyzing its multilayered implications. This research focuses on the global scale and sectoral specificities of polycentrism. Without ignoring normative pressures, we focus on reflecting the temporal evolution and prioritizing the hierarchy of firms' resources and capabilities. Addressing these challenges requires organizations to adopt flexible and dynamic strategies that integrate resource prioritization and stakeholder engagement.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative-descriptive and processual approach to investigate how organizations respond to polycentric institutional pressures by developing and prioritizing resources and capabilities for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). This approach is well-suited for understanding complex, dynamic phenomena, particularly in emerging markets where institutional challenges and uncertainties prevail (Aguinis, 2025), and has been demanded in top journals to address research in complex institutional settings (De Villa & Langley, 2024; Welch et al., 2022).

Research Strategy

The research focuses on a single case study of a Brazilian agribusiness company, AMAGGI, recognized for its leadership in exports, sustainability, and CSR practices. The case study design allows an in-depth exploration of organizational processes and institutional responses over time (Eisenhardt, 1989). Given its strategic position in the global agribusiness sector and its exposure to diverse institutional pressures at both local and international levels, we chose the company for its relevance to the study objectives.

Data Collection

Data collection involved a combination of primary and secondary sources (Donnelly & Wickham, 2021), ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. Secondary and primary data were compiled into a single project using ATLAS.ti version 24. The Reshape and TurboScribe virtual platforms were utilized to transcribe interviews and audiovisual materials, including podcasts and webinars. These sources

provided a longitudinal perspective, capturing the evolution of CSR practices and corresponding institutional pressures from 2005 to 2023.

Semi-structured interviews with 11 AMAGGI directors, employees, and three partner organizations' representatives provided rich insights into developing and implementing CSR practices. We designed the interviews to capture critical events, decision-making processes, and the organizational rationale behind resource prioritization.

Interviews followed a systematic protocol to maintain consistency and were analyzed using coding techniques to identify recurring themes and patterns (Miles & Huberman, 2018).

Archival data, including 50 sustainability reports, corporate presentations, and external audits, were analyzed to corroborate and contextualize interview findings. These sources provided a longitudinal perspective, capturing the evolution of CSR practices and the corresponding institutional pressures from 2005 to 2023.

Data Analysis

The study employs a processual analysis framework, drawing on historical and longitudinal perspectives to identify how AMAGGI's CSR practices evolved over three distinct phases: Institutionalization Phase (2005–2008): Initial responses to stakeholder pressures and regulatory demands; Expansion Phase (2009–2016): Broadening and integrating CSR initiatives into the company's strategic goals; Maturity Phase (2017–2023): Consolidation of CSR practices and alignment with global sustainability standards, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Data analysis involved the use of ATLAS.ti software for thematic coding, enabling the identification of critical events, stakeholder influences, and resource configurations across these phases. The processual lens allowed for examining temporal dynamics, highlighting how organizational responses are shaped by shifting institutional pressures (Langley, 1999). As strategies following Langley's strategies (1999), this study applied narratives, visual maps, and temporal bracketing.

Validity and Reliability

The study adopted the following measures to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings: i) triangulation: Combining multiple data sources (e.g., interviews, archival records) to validate key insights and reduce bias (Denzin, 2019); peer Review: Feedback from academic peers and stakeholders in the agribusiness sector to refine interpretations and conclusions and, member checking: Verifying interpretations with key informants to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings (Denzin, 2019).

RESULTS

Phase 1 (2005–2008): Institutionalization of CSR

During Phase 1, AMAGGI responded to intensifying global institutional pressures by initiating efforts to institutionalize Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices. These pressures stem from international regulatory frameworks, sustainability-focused non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and growing consumer demand for environmentally and socially responsible practices.

As depicted by Int-01, "We realized it was essential to implement practices that met the expectations of NGOs and the international market, as this legitimized our brand." As a result, a process of adaptation to certifications occurred, as mentioned by Int-02, "At

first, it was a challenge, but obtaining the ProTerra certification placed us on a new level of sustainability and opened important markets."

Multiple institutional pressures were referred to by Int-03 as "The demands from multiple stakeholders, such as governments and investors, forced us to adopt a more formal and structured approach to CSR." As a result, governance practices started to happen. Int-04 mentioned, "The introduction of ISO 14001 was a milestone; it became a symbol of commitment that aligned governance with sustainability".

The timeline below outlines the critical events and process changes that shaped the company's resource prioritization and CSR framework. Table 1 depicts the timeline of Phase 1.

Table 1. Timeline of Phase 1 (2005–2008)

Year	Key Event	Evidence of Change	Impact on Resource Hierarchization
2005	“Chainsaw of Gold” Award for Deforestation Practices	Negative international media attention prompted a reevaluation of environmental practices.	Allocated resources to assess environmental impact and initiate sustainable land management practices.
2006	Adoption of ISO 14001 Certification	Certification marked compliance with global environmental management standards.	Prioritized development of environmental management systems and staff training in sustainability processes.
2007	Partnership with WWF for Sustainable Soy Production	Collaboration with WWF introduced the company to sustainability certification standards like ProTerra.	Allocated resources to improve traceability and transparency in the soy supply chain.
2008	Implementation of a Sustainable Land Use Policy	Policy aligned with global standards for land conservation and biodiversity preservation.	Focused on enhancing organizational capabilities to monitor and report land use practices.

Source: Organized by the authors

Evidence of Process Changes. The public backlash from the “Chainsaw of Gold” award catalyzed a significant shift in AMAGGI's strategic priorities. The company began systematically reviewing its environmental policies, demonstrating early efforts to align with global sustainability expectations.

The adoption of ISO 14001 certification in 2006 institutionalized global environmental standards within the company. This change required investment in training, systematization of environmental practices, and development of monitoring mechanisms. Partnering with the WWF in 2007 marked a turning point in AMAGGI's CSR trajectory. This partnership facilitated knowledge transfer, helping the company incorporate sustainability criteria into its operational processes, particularly in soy production.

By 2008, AMAGGI introduced a comprehensive Sustainable Land Use Policy, signaling its commitment to biodiversity conservation and resource efficiency. This policy institutionalized sustainability within the company's strategic decision-making framework.

Impacts on Resource Hierarchization. Phase 1 exemplified how global institutional pressures acted as a catalyst for AMAGGI to hierarchize its resources. The company shifted its focus toward building capabilities in environmental management, stakeholder collaboration, and sustainability reporting. These efforts enhanced its legitimacy and laid the groundwork for a competitive CSR strategy aligned with global expectations.

Phase 2: Expansion of CSR Practices (2009–2016)

During Phase 2, the organization faced intensified global institutional pressures, including growing international scrutiny, evolving sustainability standards, and increasing demands from stakeholders such as governments, NGOs, and multinational corporations. These pressures catalyzed significant changes in processes and resource prioritization, ultimately driving the development and institutionalization of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices.

According to Int-06, “The ‘Golden Chainsaw Award’ and the IFC report acted as triggers for aligning the company’s practices with its corporate strategy. This process was reinforced by technical team training, establishing strategic partnerships, and adopting innovations in the field, laying the foundation for organizational transformation.” Similarly, Int-02 explained, “A combination of pressures and factors shaped our CSR practices. A significant driver was the involvement of financial institutions, particularly the International Finance Corporation (IFC). This pressure demanded a large investment from a multilateral agent and credibility for our operations. With this validation, we implemented a Quality Program based on Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles, conducting annual audits.” As CSR was implemented, employees realized that some changes had been implemented. Int-02 said, “When I joined, the approach to social responsibility was primarily welfare, focusing on employees’ needs rather than a strategic integration with business practices.” Table 2 presents a timeline highlighting the critical events and evidence of process changes during the second phase.

Table 2. Expansion of CSR Practices (2009–2016)

Year	Key Event	Evidence of Change
2009	Amplification of ISO 14001 Standards	Implemented environmental management systems to meet international sustainability standards.
2010	Integration into the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Framework	Established systematic reporting practices, aligning resource allocation with transparency and accountability.
2012	Partnership with WWF for Sustainable Agriculture	Strengthened resource hierarchization by prioritizing environmental preservation and stakeholder collaboration.
2013	Certification by the Roundtable on Sustainable Soy (RTRS)	Shifted focus to traceability and sustainability across the supply chain, requiring new resource allocation mechanisms.
2014	Launch of Carbon Footprint Reduction Program	Introduced initiatives targeting emissions reductions, embedding sustainability into operational processes.

Year Key Event	Evidence of Change
2015 Alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Restructured CSR strategies to address global sustainability objectives, prioritizing resources for impact-driven programs.
2016 Recognition in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI)	Validated the company's CSR performance, reinforcing the hierarchization of resources toward sustainable practices.

Source: Organized by the authors

Evidence of process changes and resource prioritization. Adopting ISO 14001 and RTRS certifications required the company to revamp operational processes, embedding sustainability metrics into core activities. This shift signaled a move from reactive compliance to proactive environmental stewardship. Participation in the GRI framework established robust reporting mechanisms, ensuring the allocation of resources toward data collection, analysis, and dissemination. This transparency strengthened stakeholder trust and facilitated long-term planning. Partnerships with organizations like WWF highlighted the importance of collaborative approaches, prioritizing resources for joint sustainability projects, and stakeholder engagement. The alignment with the UN SDGs marked a strategic shift toward integrating global sustainability goals into corporate strategies. This decision required reallocating financial and human resources to develop programs with measurable societal impacts.

Implications for CSR Development. The Phase 2 illustrates how global institutional pressures influenced the company's processes, compelling it to prioritize resources strategically to meet rising expectations, and the firm started changing its strategies from reactive to proactive actions. By aligning with international frameworks and engaging in collaborative initiatives, the organization embedded sustainability into its core operations, demonstrating how hierarchical resource management can underpin effective CSR practices.

Phase 3: Mature of CSR Practices (2017–2023)

Phase 3 of the study, from 2017 to 2023, represents the maturity phase of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices within the organization. During this period, the firm faced intensifying global institutional pressures driven by evolving international regulations, heightened stakeholder expectations, and the alignment with global sustainability standards, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Interviews highlighted changes in the CSR evolution. Int-01 reflected, “Initially, the focus was on complying with the local environmental regulations to avoid fines and sanctions. Over time, these efforts transformed into a structured sustainability program involving the entire supply chain.” This sense is collective, as mentioned by interviewee Int-05, “Our early CSR activities were limited to community donations and basic environmental efforts. However, these initial steps paved the way for integrating CSR into our core business strategy.” In addition, Int-07 explained, “There was no clear CSR policy in place; actions were often reactive. However, engaging with external partners and NGOs during this phase provided us with the tools to develop more proactive and comprehensive CSR frameworks later”. Also, Int-12 said, “CSR practices had evolved significantly, incorporating measurable goals aligned with global standards like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and leveraging partnerships to enhance our governance

structure.” In a more holistic understanding, Int-12 added, “Many pressures from everywhere influenced a shift from compliance to innovation-driven CSR strategies, embedding these into business practices across the value chain.”

This phase is marked by the organization's strategic response to these pressures through the hierarchical prioritization of resources, resulting in transformative changes in its CSR processes and practices. Table 3 presents the key events and evidence of process changes in Phase 3.

Table 3. Mature of CSR Practices (2017–2023)

Year	Event	Evidence of Change
2017	Adoption of the Science-Based Targets Initiative (SBTi)	Initiated the integration of measurable environmental goals into the organization's CSR strategy.
2018	Implementation of the Carbon Neutrality Program	Developed processes for monitoring and reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the supply chain.
2019	Launch of the Platform Originar 2.0	Digital transformation of traceability systems to ensure compliance with sustainability certifications.
2020	Response to the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)	Enhanced supplier monitoring and resource allocation to meet stricter EU sustainability requirements.
2021	Alignment with the UN SDGs, focusing on goals related to climate action and responsible production	Strengthened CSR initiatives through partnerships and multi-stakeholder collaborations.
2022	Expansion of the Renewable Energy Program	Diversified energy resources by investing in small hydropower projects and solar energy solutions.
2023	Achievement of multiple international certifications (e.g., ProTerra, ISO 14001; Amaggi Regnera)	Consolidated resource allocation processes to comply with global environmental and social standards. Implementation of the Program AMAGGI Regenera is an initiative that strengthens our commitment to a low-carbon agricultural.

Source: Organized by the authors

Throughout Phase 3, the organization demonstrated resource hierarchization by focusing on key areas such as technology integration, stakeholder collaboration, and regulatory compliance. For instance, adopting the Platform Originar 2.0 reflects the prioritization of digital capabilities to enhance supply chain traceability and ensure adherence to global certifications. Similarly, the expansion of the Renewable Energy Program underscores a shift toward sustainable resource utilization, showcasing the strategic reallocation of investments to support carbon neutrality.

These initiatives highlight the company's ability to adapt its processes to global institutional demands. The organization reinforced its legitimacy and competitive advantage by integrating international certifications and aligning with global sustainability frameworks. Additionally, the emphasis on renewable energy and

traceability systems illustrates how resource prioritization underpins CSR practices, ensuring that the firm remains responsive to environmental challenges and stakeholder expectations.

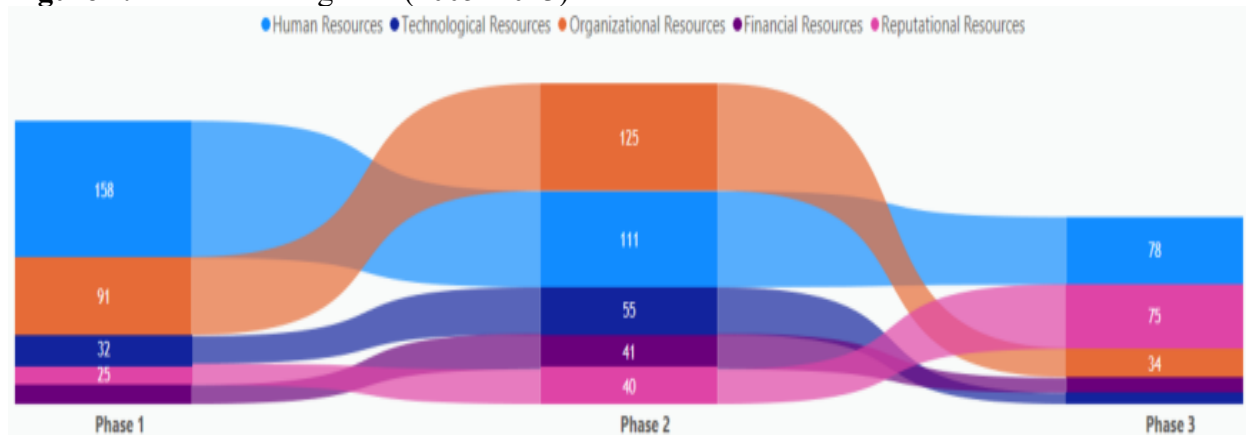
Consolidating a process initiated during Phase 2, in Phase 3, the firm becomes a proactive institutional agent, establishing patterns and mitigating pressures from the institutional polycentric environment, represented by arrows in the reverse sense of Phase 1 and relating responses directly to the events.

The timeline of Phase 3 provides clear evidence of how the organization responded to these demands, leveraging its CSR initiatives to navigate complex institutional landscapes and sustain its competitive edge in global markets as a leader in its industry, reflecting what somehow Ostrom (1990) argues as an institutional evolution of collective action.

Reconfiguration of Resources and Capabilities for CSR

The research findings demonstrated, during the period analyzed, AMAGGI reconfigured its resources and capabilities to implement CSR. Figure 1 shows the hierarchy of resources and capabilities throughout the company's three distinct phases, represented by the periods 2005-2008 (institutionalization), 2009-2016 (expansion), and 2017-2023 (maturity). It reveals an evolutionary trajectory that reflects the practical application of the RBt guidelines for developing CSR practices. This trajectory illustrates how the company leveraged its tangible and intangible resources to develop specific capabilities in response to environmental, social, and economic demands.

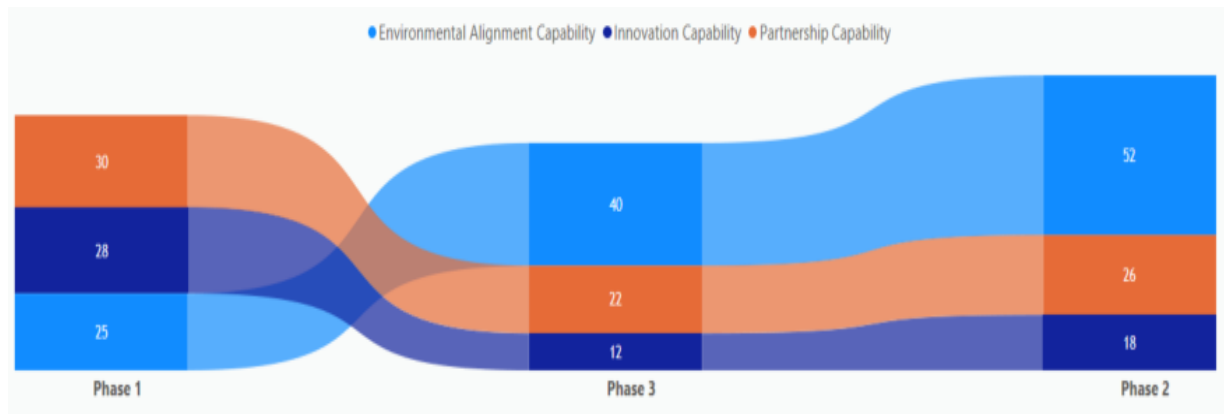
Figure 1. Resource categories (2005–2023)



Source: Organized by the authors

The results show how AMAGGI prioritized its resources and capabilities throughout three distinct phases. In the initial phase (2005–2008), the focus was on human and organizational resources, which were essential for establishing the foundations of CSR, while financial and technological resources were less of a priority. Between 2009 and 2016, during the expansion phase, financial resources took center stage, as they were necessary to enable new investments and market acquisitions. In the maturity phase (2017–2023), technological innovation and reputational resources took center stage, reflecting a more sophisticated strategy of differentiation and global competitiveness, while human resources assumed a more maintenance role.

Figure 2. Capabilities categories (2005–2023)



Source: Organized by the authors

Regarding capabilities, Figure 2 shows that, initially, technological innovation and partnership building were central, positioning the company for growth. As it entered the expansion phase, environmental alignment became a priority, emphasizing adaptation to regulatory and market requirements, while innovation and partnerships remained secondary. In the recent phase, from 2017 to 2023, a balance can be observed: although environmental alignment remains relevant, it gives way to broader integration with technological innovation and strategic alliances. This trajectory demonstrates that AMAGGI has successfully transformed its resources and capabilities into dynamic competitive advantages, thereby strengthening its sustainable operations and positioning in the global agribusiness sector.

DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of the study, aligning them with existing literature on institutional polycentrism, resource-based theory (RBT), and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The analysis is organized into three phases, reflecting the temporal evolution of CSR practices, followed by an integrated discussion emphasizing the changing prioritization of resources in response to polycentric institutional pressures.

Phase 1: Institutionalization of CSR

The initial phase of CSR implementation was marked by the organization’s response to mounting institutional pressures, particularly normative demands from international stakeholders and regulatory bodies. During this phase, the focus was on establishing foundational CSR practices to legitimize operations and secure stakeholder trust. Literature on institutional theory suggests that early responses to institutional pressures are often compliance-driven, with firms adopting practices to align with prevailing norms and avoid sanctions (North, 1990; Scott, 2001).

In alignment with the literature, this study found that the company’s adoption of basic sustainability certifications (e.g., ISO 14001) and environmental monitoring tools was a starting point for CSR. However, these practices were largely reactive, addressing immediate stakeholder concerns rather than integrating CSR into strategic decision-making. This movement reflects the literature's notion that organizations prioritize

legitimacy over value creation when responding to institutional pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Phase 2: Expansion of CSR Practices

The second phase was characterized by a significant expansion of CSR practices, driven by the increasing influence of global sustainability agendas and the emergence of sector-specific pressures. The organization began integrating CSR into its strategic framework, developing capabilities to address broader environmental and social concerns. This re-addressing aligns with the resource-based view, which emphasizes the role of unique resources and capabilities in achieving competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Teece et al., 1997).

Empirically, the study found that the company implemented advanced supply chain traceability systems during this phase and strengthened its partnerships with NGOs and international bodies. These efforts resonate with literature findings, suggesting that firms transitioning from compliance to strategic CSR often leverage collaborative networks to enhance their resource base (Husted & Allen, 2006; Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014). This phase also shifted towards proactive engagement with institutional pressures as the company began anticipating and addressing stakeholder demands before they materialized.

Phase 3: Maturity and Consolidation of CSR (2017–2023)

The third phase represents the maturity stage of CSR, where the company institutionalizes its practices and aligns them with global sustainability standards, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The findings reveal that resource prioritization has become increasingly sophisticated, with the company adopting innovative technologies, such as Platform Originar 2.0, to enhance transparency and efficiency in its CSR efforts.

This phase aligns with literature proposing a dynamization extension to RBT by focusing on the continuous adaptation of resources to changing environments, consolidating what Barney (1991) proposed initially: a sustained competitive advantage is a result of a combination between a firm's resource heterogeneity, which is dependent of its history. The company's ability to reconfigure its resource basis to meet evolving institutional demands highlights its strategic agility, a critical factor for sustaining competitive advantage in polycentric institutional contexts (Aligica & Tarko, 2012; Ostrom, 2009), reconfiguring the hierarchy of resources available and ready to optimize (Javidan, 1998).

Integrated Analysis: Evolving Resource Prioritization in CSR

Across the three phases, the study highlights a clear trajectory of resource prioritization, moving from reactive compliance to proactive strategic alignment. Initially, the firm allocated resources to meet immediate institutional demands, but the company developed a more structured and strategic approach to CSR over time. This positioning aligns with the literature's emphasis on the role of resource hierarchization in enabling firms to respond effectively to complex institutional pressures (Barney et al., 2021; Khanra et al., 2022).

For example, prioritizing investments in environmental sustainability, community engagement, and ethical supply chain management can transform CSR from a reactive obligation into a proactive strategy that generates tangible and intangible benefits. By systematically developing and deploying resources to implement robust CSR practices,

companies can enhance their operational efficiency, strengthen stakeholder relationships, and improve their adaptability to institutional changes.

A key finding of this study is the evolving nature of resource prioritization as a mechanism for navigating polycentric institutional pressures. In the early stages, external pressures primarily influenced resource allocation, reflecting a compliance-driven approach. However, in later phases, the company demonstrated a capacity to anticipate and adapt to institutional demands, reallocating resources to areas such as technological innovation and stakeholder collaboration. This process of dynamic prioritization allowed the company to enhance its CSR practices, ensuring alignment with global standards while maintaining competitiveness. In this sense, this study contributes to RBT studies proposing that not only is detaining key resources vital, but prioritizing them differently over time is unequivocally determinant of its sustainable advantage to face global polycentric environments.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of integrating CSR with broader strategic objectives, a theme widely supported in the literature (Kramer & Porter, 2011; Montiel et al., 2021). By aligning CSR initiatives with its core business strategy, the company could leverage its unique resources and capabilities to create shared value, benefiting stakeholders and the organization.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses the research question: How do organizations respond to global polycentric institutional pressures by prioritizing resources and capabilities over time? The objective was to explore how firms navigate these pressures, particularly in dynamic and global markets, by leveraging the Resource-Based Theory (RBT). By examining the case of a Brazilian agribusiness leader, the findings provide a nuanced understanding of resource prioritization in the face of competing institutional demands.

Theoretical Contribution

The study offers a significant theoretical contribution by introducing a dynamic framework to discuss how RBT can evolve to address complex institutional challenges. Unlike traditional static applications of RBT, this framework integrates a dynamic perspective, highlighting the reconfiguration of resources as a response to global polycentric institutional pressures. This integration bridges a critical gap in the literature, demonstrating how firms adapt, anticipate, and strategically align their resource hierarchies to sustain competitive advantage in multifaceted environments.

Practical Implications

For practitioners, the findings underscore the importance of strategic agility in navigating global institutional pressures, particularly in environments characterized by polycentric governance. Organizations operating in such settings must adopt a proactive approach to resource prioritization, leveraging stakeholder collaboration, technological innovation, and sustainability practices. For firms in emerging economies, aligning Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives with broader business strategies can enhance legitimacy, resilience, and competitive positioning in global markets.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its single-case design, focusing exclusively on one organization within the agribusiness sector. Future research should

adopt a comparative approach across multiple sectors to validate and generalize these findings. Additionally, the study's reliance on retrospective data may constrain its ability to capture the real-time evolution of resource prioritization processes.

Propositions for Future Research

Future research directions can advance in several complementary ways. First, it is essential to examine how resource prioritization mechanisms differ across sectors subject to polycentric institutional pressures, with a particular emphasis on comparative analyses between emerging and developed economies. Additionally, technological advancements, especially in areas such as artificial intelligence, warrant attention regarding their role in facilitating resource reconfiguration under complex governance structures. Another promising line of inquiry involves exploring the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and firm-level dynamic capabilities in fostering resilience and innovation in the face of institutional uncertainties. Expanding the analysis beyond the agribusiness sector to include other industries is also critical, as it enables cross-industry comparisons of responses to normative polycentric institutional pressures. Furthermore, it is essential to understand how companies orchestrate multiple actors within ecosystems to protect common goods and ensure the sustainability of supply chains, including comprehensive monitoring from origin to destination. Ultimately, in-depth studies are necessary to investigate the role of firms in coordinating innovative and sustainable initiatives, underscoring their ability to integrate resources and align diverse interests.

Organizations respond to global polycentric institutional pressures by progressively evolving resource prioritization strategies. Initially reactive, these strategies mature into proactive, dynamic mechanisms, enabling firms to anticipate and align their resources with shifting institutional demands. Adapting and innovating through dynamic resource configurations is critical for sustaining competitive advantage in complex and polycentric environments. By framing RBT within this dynamic context, this research provides a pathway for future theoretical and practical advancements in understanding strategic organizational responses to global challenges.

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