

Mega planning: from theory to practice - A 20-year travel with Roger Kaufman

By: Mariano Bernardez, PhD., CPT

Abstract

Mariano Bernardez makes a recollection of his experience collaborating with Roger Kaufman as a personal and professional testimony of Kaufman's influence in his career and personal life as well as the lasting social impact of his contributions and projects.

I first met Roger Kaufman in person in April 1993. I was presenting for the first time my work as a management consultant in Argentina with two of my client companies. I knew of him before, when working as a consultant for an UNDP project I read his 1972 book Systemic Planning of Education translated into Spanish. It was 1978 and for me, the discovery of a systemic vision that would drive my career for many years until that day in Atlanta, Georgia, when I first met the man himself.

Which is to say, I met Roger and Jan, his wife and companion in life and in his long and distinguished career as a strategic planning and management guru. If there is such a thing like a match made in Heaven, that title belong to these two powerfully intelligent, charming and sensible love birds. Jan -a professional puppeteer- often participated in Roger's sessions, showing yet another side of his character -should I say their?- that set him aside: his complete lack of pomposity and pretentiousness. A "rara avis" among academics and certainly not what you expected from a celebrity-professor emeritus and double PhD.

Roger's mind impressed not just for its insight and speed, but also for his breath and reach. He was trained as an engineer -he worked for MacDonnel Douglas and even participated in the design of the first and last turbine-propelled Indy car that Parnelli Jones drove to victory in Indianapolis- and a psychologist -a friend and intellectual correspondent of such diversely minded men like Viktor Frankl, Peter Drucker, Tom Gilbert and David Kahneman- and he put both sides of his background to task in his research and theoretical innovation.

We clicked immediately -I still have to find someone who didn't succumbed to the mix of grace and intellect of Roger and Jan- and started scheming some plans together, first at ISPI, later with my own clients in Argentina.

I brought Roger in 1996 to work with some of my Board clients at leading banks such as Banco de Galicia and Bank Boston, and with managers and directors at the Perez Companc Holding, then

spanning from oil to communications and even nuclear industry. I was as impressed as benefitted by his unique ability to open minds and walk board members beyond the confines of conventional wisdom and quarterly profit & loss reports, making them look at the whole picture of their clients, their clients' clients and their shared stake in the communities every organization must serve doing good in order to do well.

Opportunity called in 1998, when one of the companies I have been working with, Refinor -as they called the Refineries of the Northwest of Argentina, faced a new challenge. We had helped them for three years -from 1993 to 1996- to turn around a dilapidated and underinvested state-owned company by way of management development and GE workouts, streamlining operations, engaging management, workers and unions in reducing costs and innovating, but by 1998, we hit a wall. The company was doing well but its most talented young employees and managers were leaving because they didn't want to raise their children and expose their families to the decay of the communities that went from depending from an oversized welfare state to joblessness and crime.

Refinor's CEO, Miguel Bianchetti, asked me to work on turning our management development program "outside-in" and apply it to the community to make it successful again. It was a no-brainer for me to think in Roger, and I was fortunate enough to discover other of his unique traits: the man cannot leave a crises to waste.

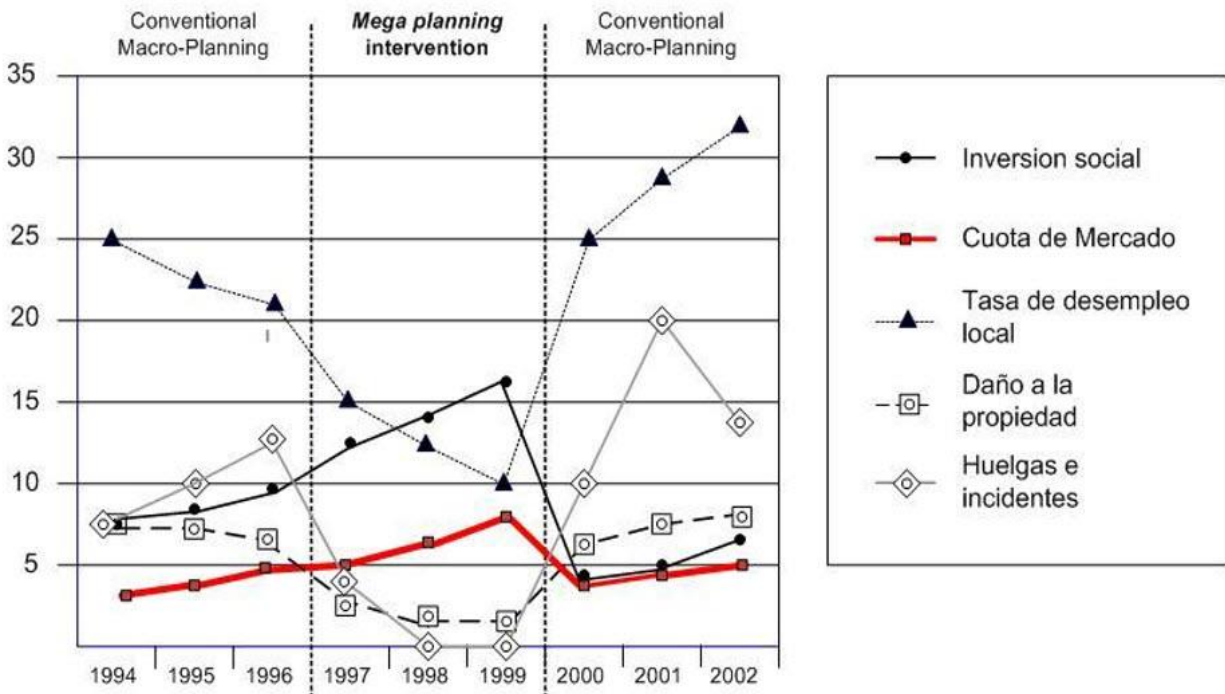
We worked together putting in place a Mega planning program to involve the entire company and others in developing their communities for the next three years. Most of those who left the company for a hefty compensation -an average of 120 thousand dollars of 1995- couldn't find jobs or make it as entrepreneurs but they owned land and sent their children to Agrarian schools.

Working with the communities we helped creating 120 sustainable farms growing what then was an experimental crop -soybeans- but would bring a windfall in the coming years. And what a wind it was!: the soybean price went from under 200 dollars a ton in 1998 to over 600 dollars in 2002. Those who stood the course made a fortune.

And Refinor did well too. When I came back in 2004, the company have been sold to Brazilian state oil company Petrobras and they have abandoned the Mega planning approach to go back to the more conventional MBA-style "stick to your business" approach. I was lucky to be able to collect and compare a nine-year time series of data comparing the 3 years of Roger's Megaplanning with 3 years before and after of "old MBA school" methods. I compared social indicators -such as the cost of riots and crime- and business results -such as market share- and developed the statistics shown in Figure 1.



Doble cuadro de resultado – Caso Refinor



Doing good and doing well were not only not incompatible, but mutually beneficial. I published my lesson in a 2005 article titled "Achieving Business Success by Developing Clients and Community", published by Performance Improvement Quarterly.

From 2005 to the present, we kept working with Roger in new and ever more challenging projects: helping the Sonora Institute of Technology led by Gonzalo Rodriguez Villanueva develop more than 34 organizations and create 9,500 new jobs in the Southern Sonora corridor between 2005 and 2009, and developing a plan to transform Colon City, Panama, which is now in course.

And -God willing- we keep looking for bigger trouble. That's another thing I learned from Roger. If something works fine, it's time to change it."

In the personal side of this 20 year trip, I got much more than what I have bargained for: a mentor and a friend in a profession where those two are scarce and infrequent. Roger and Jan were always when I wanted them (be careful to avoid the use of "need" as a verb around them) and then some. And I joined a large group of diverse people speaking tongues -from Spanish to Turkish and Chinese- that can tell the same story.

But this is my own, and I'm happy to share it with you all.

Bibliography

- Bernardez, M. (2005). Achieving Business Success by Developing Clients and Community: Lessons from Leading Companies, Emerging Economies and a Nine Year Case Study . *Performance Improvement Quarterly, ISPI* , 37-55.
- Bernardez, M. (2009). The incubator University. *Social and Organizational Performance Review, Year 2, Vol. 2* , 13-28.
- Bernardez, M. (2009). The power of entrepreneurial ecosystems: extracting boom from bust. *Social and Organizational Performance Review* , 12-45.
- Bernardez, M., & Kaufman, R. (2013). Turning social capital into social performance: three case studies and a new framework for value creation. *Performance Improvement, Vol 52* , 5-18.
- Bernardez, M., Arias Vallarino, C., Krivatsy, A., & Kaufman, R. (2012). City Doctors: A Systemic Approach to Transform Colon City, Panama. *Performance Improvement Quarterly Volume 4 Number 4* , 41-60.

About Mariano Bernardez

Mariano Bernárdez is an international consultant specialized in improving team, organizational and societal performance through management development and collaborative technologies.

Bernardez is Executive Director of the Performance Improvement Institute (www.piionline.org), first PhD and MBI program in Performance Improvement that he started with a senior Faculty at the Sonora Institute of Technology (ITSON) and continues as an international program.

He has been consultant to governmental and non-governmental organizations in multiple performance improvement, management development projects.

Bernardez has designed and implemented programs helping create 9,500 new jobs and 34 organizations in Mexico (Ari-Sun corridor - 2005 to the present) and Arizona as well as turning around communities and creating micro-business in Salta, Argentina (Refinor 1997-1999), and turning around the cities of Bariloche (partnership Conciencia-Kellog Foundation-MBC, 1997), Pico Truncado (MBC, YPF-Repsol, 1998) and producing a systemic plan for the transformation of Colon, Panama (2011-present).

He has conducted and published data-based research on his experiences in peer-reviewed publications such as *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, *Performance Improvement*, *Social and Organizational Performance Review*, *Educational Technology* and others in the field of business, government and management.

Born in Argentina, citizen of Spain and of the United States, he is considered a specialist in managing international, multilingual and multicultural projects as well as developing new organizations, value chains and cities.

More information about him can be found at: https://www.linkedin.com/in/mariano-bernardez-b9899b1?trk=nav_responsive_tab_profile_pic

He can be reached at: mbernardez@expert2business.com