

Abstract:

How does a small cooperative of resource-constrained farmers formed under colonial rule in a developing country grow to become one of the largest dairy cooperatives in the world? In this paper we trace the historical evolution of AMUL India's first 30 years of existence to discern how key strategic actors in the organization skillfully engaged with external and internal forces over time to steer it in the face of steep challenges and utilized adversities to garner legitimacy, support, and resources. We conceptualize such efforts under an overarching framework of purposive embedding, thereby bringing out a more processual, dynamic, and multidimensional conception of how strategies are embedded in the broader socio-political milieu. Notably we find that purposive embedding of an organization's strategic actions not only takes into account prevailing exigencies in a given period in time but also manifests in the creative use of ideas from the historical context. History however is not repeated but generatively reenacted.