

Article

Managing open strategy paradoxes in the public sector

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The open strategy approach advocates the inclusion of external agents, partners, and employees working at different levels in the strategy construction process. This movement toward openness and inclusion has also advanced in the public sector through collaborative governance. This development is due to changes in understanding the state's role as a promoter of interaction between public and private actors. The central argument of this essay is that there are paradoxes inherent in the use of open strategy in the public sector that need to be managed in order to avoid or minimize damaging tensions between those involved. The essay adopts a reflexive and inductive approach based on the theoretical perspectives of both open strategy and collaborative governance. As a result, it contributes to the field of public management studies and presents theoretical and practical propositions that indicate ways of managing open strategy.

Keywords: paradoxes; tensions; collaborative governance; open strategy; public management; management of paradoxes; strategic management.

Gerenciando paradoxos da estratégia aberta no setor público


A chamada “estratégia aberta” preconiza a inclusão de colaboradores de diferentes níveis, bem como de agentes externos e parceiros, no processo de construção da estratégia. Esse movimento de abertura e inclusão também tem avançado no setor público por meio da governança colaborativa, como consequência das mudanças do entendimento do papel do Estado numa forma de gestão que promove a interação entre os atores públicos e privados. O argumento central deste ensaio é que há paradoxos inerentes à estratégia aberta no setor público que precisam ser gerenciados para evitar ou minimizar tensões prejudiciais entre os envolvidos. O artigo adota uma abordagem reflexiva e indutiva, baseada nas perspectivas teóricas tanto da estratégia aberta quanto da governança colaborativa. Como resultado, contribui para o campo de estudos em gestão pública e apresenta proposições teóricas e práticas que indicam caminhos para gerenciamento da estratégia aberta.

Palavras-chave: paradoxos; tensões; governança colaborativa; estratégia aberta; gestão pública; gestão de paradoxos; gestão estratégica.

ISSN: 1982-3134 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-761220230177x>

Article received on May 24, 2023 and accepted on October 16, 2023.

[Translated version] Note: All quotes in English translated by this article's translator.

Editor-in-chief:Alketa Peci (Fundação Getulio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro / RJ – Brazil) **Associate editor:**Sandro Cabral (Insper Instituto de Ensino e Pesquisa, São Paulo / SP – Brazil) **Reviewers:**Flávio Sergio Rezende Nunes de Souza (Marinha do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro / RJ – Brazil) Hernan Edgardo Contreras Alday (Fundação Escola de Sociologia e Política de São Paulo, São Paulo / SP – Brazil) 

One of the reviewers did not authorize the disclosure of their identity.

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Gestión de las paradojas de la estrategia abierta en el sector público

La denominada estrategia abierta aboga por la inclusión de empleados de diferentes niveles, y de agentes y socios externos, en el proceso de construcción de la estrategia. Este movimiento hacia la apertura y la inclusión también ha avanzado en el sector público a través de la gobernanza colaborativa, como consecuencia de cambios en la comprensión del papel del Estado en una forma de gestión que promueve la interacción entre actores públicos y privados. El argumento central de este ensayo es que existen paradojas inherentes al uso de la estrategia abierta en el sector público que deben gestionarse para evitar o minimizar tensiones dañinas entre los involucrados. El ensayo adopta un enfoque reflexivo e inductivo, basado en las perspectivas teóricas tanto de la estrategia abierta como de la gobernanza colaborativa. Como resultado, contribuye al campo de los estudios en gestión pública y presenta propuestas teóricas y prácticas que indican caminos para la gestión de estrategias abiertas.

Palabras clave: paradojas; tensiones; gobernanza colaborativa; estrategia abierta; gestión pública; gestión de paradojas; gestión estratégica.

1. INTRODUCTION

The process of strategy formulation was traditionally seen as a centralised movement, marked by choices made by leaders (Andrews, 1971). However, when analysing the challenges posed by strategy implementation, researchers started to investigate the effects of more participative processes that included greater diversity of organisational players and identified that such inclusion would increase commitment to its implementation (Oswald et al., 1994). Institutionally inspired research have also investigated the importance of the participation of external players for the success of collective strategic practices (Bernardes & Sá, 2009; Gundolf et al., 2006; Yami, 2006; Yami et al., 2006). The last decades witnessed, though, the development of more inclusive practices, the so-called open strategy, which proposes the participation of collaborators from different levels, as well as that of external partners, in organisations strategic processes (Whittington et al., 2011).

How to understand the opening process has been a subject of the literature specialised in this field. Appleyard and Chesbrough (2017) and Whittington et al. (2011) argue that such processes are marked by the management of inherent tensions. Specifically, they refer to the paradox of transparency (of contents under construction) and inclusion (of external and internal players).

The opening and inclusion movement has progressed in the public sector context, in consequence of changes to the way the role of the State is understood as well as its relationship to society (Martins & Marini, 2014). Practices currently adopted by the public sector at different levels and segments are already involving multiple stakeholders such as citizens, civil associations, companies, and universities, which hold different worldviews. The State is not self-sufficient; it needs other social players as partners to come up with solutions, although it still remains responsible for generating public value. We refer here to the impossibility that the State remedies contemporary problems exclusively by means of hierarchy.

Therefore, the concept of Network-State represents an alternative management approach that promotes interaction among public and private players (Bryson et al., 2014). In addition, debates are taking place over the resumption of national State planning (Gomide & Couto, 2023) involving greater participation of society in order to more assertively approach public policies in environments surrounded by complex problems and marked by strong uncertainties and scarce resources and submitted to the policies of transparency and accountability (Harrison & Sayogo, 2014).

In this context, challenges emerge, because interactions take place between autonomous players that differ in terms of authority and resource allocation, players that are interdependent and share interests and conflicts that must be necessarily negotiated (Sorensen & Torfing, 2009).

Just like in the private sector, the articulation of players around the State for the formulation and later implementation of open strategies is subject to paradoxes that must be managed to avoid or minimise tensions that might negatively affect results. For instance, if, on the one hand, transparency, commitment, and inclusion of stakeholders in the formulation of strategies lead to the democratisation of decision-making processes (Pitz & Adler, 2016), on the other hand, they may result in poorer performance due to the time required for alignment. Although some studies promote convergence of open strategy and public management (Hansen et al., 2022; Malhotra et al., 2017), they do not mention the paradoxes that characterise this context.

Thus, this essay is motivated by the need to widen understanding of the tensions that emerge in open strategy processes conducted by public managers and point to aspects that are relevant enough to deserve attention. Our central argument suggests that there are inherent paradoxes in the use of open strategy by the public sector that must be managed to avoid harmful tensions or to minimise those that may come up among participants.

To support and critically discuss this argument, we relied on reflections and concepts of two fields of study. Differently from an empirical article, this essay is based on the reflective capability for understanding and analysing reality (Meneghetti, 2011). Thus, we initially recalled the evolution of public management practices and the concept of collaborative governance, which defines the basic elements that conduct cooperation relationships. Next, we address studies on participative processes up to modern open strategy and the tensions that may emerge from its adoption. Subsequently, we made use of inductive logic to reflect on the theoretical lines of thought presented and propose that the adoption of open strategy by public organisations poses paradoxes that must be appropriately managed by the stakeholders. We conclude reflecting on the need to manage such paradoxes and their potential harmful tensions, indicating directions for empirical research.

2. EVOLUTION OF MANAGERIAL PARADIGMS IN BRAZILIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

Relations between State and society have changed over the past years, being characterised by reform agendas that are directly influenced by the characteristics of the context in which they have taken place. Historical and political change contexts brought about significant transformations in the performance dynamics of State and private enterprises in matters related to the generation and promotion of public welfare. In a wider sense, we may list different State models, such as developmentalism, liberal and its migration to a context of collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bevir, 2010; Bevir & Rhodes, 2006; Cristofoli et al., 2021; Emerson et al., 2012).

Martins and Marini (2014) described the major milestones in the changes to State performance. The first milestone, the bureaucratic agenda, was aimed at implementing an orthodox bureaucratic pattern (Weberian) to put in practice the Keynesian developmentalism and overcome patrimonialism in favour of greater rationality in the relationship between politics and administration. The second, the managerial agenda - also known as new public management -, was characterised by professionalism in management, by the creation of by the search for results and cost reductions. We can easily notice the adoption of private-sector practices and tools by the public sector.

The concern about the means has been expanded through focus on ends - the objectives of development -, consequently strengthening the governmental planning approach. Finally, the collaborative governance agenda addresses a more contemporary model, marked by pluralism,

complexity, ambiguity, and fragmentation. The State now acts in a collaborative way, oriented to results that generate sustainable value for society, value that may be generated in partnership with private entities to produce services, policies, and public goods (Emerson et al., 2012).

In brief, it is marked by co-creation processes aimed at legitimating developmental agendas. This new way of action is based on the hypothesis that unilateral action carried out by the State alone is no longer able to respond to the complex changes and challenges posed by society, therefore requiring competences that transcend organisational borders. In other words, governments also depend on partnerships that operate “aimed at coordinating strategies of actors with different goals and preferences with regard to a certain problem or policy measure within an existing network of inter-organizational relations” (Blanco et al., 2011, p. 302).

We are dealing here with a new cycle, whose focus is on relations that are more flexible. We may say that modern (and successful) planning depends, therefore on the State’s ability to interact with society when developing a vision of the future, aligning resources and efforts to its materialisation (Gomide & Couto, 2023).

A central aspect of such participative process is co-creation, here considered a fundamental element in the generation of public value. For Torfing et al. (2021), co-creation involves all stakeholders in the promotion of solutions to complex problems and represents advancement in regard to planning and formulation of public policies. It represents an important mechanism to deal with public employees because, under ideal conditions, it may help understand plural social needs, mobilising and prioritising resources, expanding the reach of actions, and innovating and improving provision of services to citizens, not to mention the increase in democratic legitimacy. In addition, an amply participative and hearing process gives public organisations – otherwise slow – greater flexibility and adaptability to respond to constantly changing environmental conditions. The authors also reinforce the importance of co-creation in fiscal-restrictive contexts, in that it allows for the delivery of more assertive public policies.

Although collaboration is currently regarded as a relevant alternative and a way to a more flexible and proactive governance, we may also perceive an overvaluation of its merits and a consequent tendency to neglect its problems and limitations, that is, the fact that they are often unstable, diffuse, and opaque (Sorensen & Torfing, 2009). Additionally, this combination of different players may create tensions that require the development of abilities focused on these interactions.

A first need is the one related to understanding how to govern such relations. Sorensen e Torfing (2009, 2021) defined such network governance as a stable articulation among players that interact amid negotiated conflicts, which are interdependent but keep their autonomy. The relations are characterised by horizontality. This does not mean, however, that the players are equal in terms of authority and / or resource allocation. Consequently, no player has enough power to gain control over its peers (Torfing, 2005). They interact in search of consensus, and to build up trust and common understanding, and this does not imply that the choices result from unanimous decisions. To the contrary, they may demand a governance system composed of contractual elements, which include rules and roles; normative, such as norms, values and standards; cognitive, like codes, concepts and specific knowledge; and, as proposed by Torfing (2005), imaginary, since it produces common identities, ideologies and expectations.

Differently from the traditional forms of governance, collaborative governance coexists with decision-making processes that are not necessarily hierarchic but are aimed at promoting stakeholders

interaction and empowerment (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). On the one hand, they may be more effective, because a greater involvement ensures not only commitment but also solutions more appropriately designed to fit the problems to be tackled.

On the other hand, taking into consideration what is already known about open and wide participative processes (Hautz et al., 2017), there is an inevitable need to deal with paradoxes and tensions that may emerge from them. These paradoxes must be managed in their different dimensions (Hautz et al., 2017), including the specificities and complexities inherent in public contexts (Hansen et al., 2022; Malhotra et al., 2017; Pittz & Adler, 2016; Torfing et al., 2019).

3. THE STRATEGIC PROCESS AS PARTICIPATIVE PROCESS

From the point of view of the strategy field itself, the formulation process, as long as the leader's discretionality is acknowledged (Child, 1972), has been traditionally regarded as a top-down decision-making process conducted by the leadership (Andrews, 1971; Ansoff, 1965). As studies on the challenges of implementation progressed (Ansoff & McDonnell, 1983; Bourgeois & Brodwin, 1984; Hrebiniak & Joyce, 1984), a new academic research line started to investigate the effects of a more participative process. It then became evident that the involvement of middle managers in the formulation of the strategy (Westley, 1990) also increased their commitment to its implementation (Oswald et al., 1994). However, the literature, so far, restricted its analyses to the participation of players internal to the organisation.

A parallel approach, taking into consideration alliances with external players, was developed based on seminal work by Astley (1984) and Astley and Fombrun (1983). It argues in favour of the construction of collective strategies by groups of organisations willing to jointly face the difficulties brought about by contexts. These are approaches derived from the ecology of organisations (Hannan & Freeman, 1977), that that stated that organisations in collective arrangements could be a strategic response of companies willing to optimise mutual relations in order to favour common adaptation. Astley and Fombrun (1983) did not ignore that collaboration could generate tensions in companies that associate with competitors. However, they claimed that, operating collectively, companies would be able to combine efforts to share strategic information that could more beneficial to the group that operating individually, even competing for resources. These same authors also pointed to the importance of the institutional role of leaders when engaging their organisations in partnerships and collaborations. Involved in the design of collective strategies, they would be more intensively demanded to share values and maintain socio-institutional links than when concerned with the mere survival of their own organisations.

Institutionally biased researches highlighted the importance of the participation of other institutional players as a way to ensure that collective strategy practices could be successful (Bernardes & Sá, 2009; Gundolf et al., 2006; Yami et al., 2006). According to Yami (2006, p. 99), inclusion of other players would be a natural consequence of the advancement of practices. He observed that the interest for collective strategies grew as public power became interested in reorganising segments of the economy, "privileging a logic where coherence (in terms of resources and competences) reached a collective level (local production systems, technological hubs, competitive hubs etc.)".

The importance of the participation of other external players to the success of collective strategies became more evident in researches conducted by Gundolf and Jaouen (2005) and Gundolf

et al. (2006), who demonstrated how local institutions could help obtain resources, even in case of projects conceived by the public sector. According to their researches, not all collective strategies had to be designed by the participating organisations to be successful. For Bernardes and De Sá (2009), however, organisations with higher chances of being more successful at such enterprises would be those who paid attention to the collective process and to the antagonism itself, avoiding to get passively involved with offers of public resources, thus running the risk of going astray, erroneously led by extraneous interests.

2.1 Open strategy

The process of strategy formulation, however, has changed significantly over the last decades. Articles by Chesbrough and Appleyard (2007) and Whittington et al. (2011) increased the interest of the academy in the open strategy process, identified as “the process by which corporations increasingly innovate by pooling knowledge and ideas with communities of external agents, e.g. users, business partners and universities” (Whittington et al., 2011, p. 534). Open strategy is less than a democratic development of a strategy but reaches beyond the practice of open innovation (Hautz et al., 2017).

Literature has already progressed to the point that Appleyard and Chesbrough (2017) separated it into two different fields of interest: one related to the contents of the opening and the other to the opening process. In this article, we are interested in the process of opening the strategy. There are not many empirical studies addressing actual examples of open strategy, but their number is increasing. Yeane (2011), for instance, presented the benefits and challenges of the process of involving employees in the formulation of a strategy for the open-resource company RedHat and its impacts on the commitment and the quickness of implementation.

Luedicke et al. (2017) observed that the practices adopted in the formulation of an open strategy at German Premium Cola improved legitimisation of decisions, although participants used opportunities selectively. The open construction of Wikimedia was analysed by Dobusche Kapeller (2018) and by Dobusch et al. (2019), who discussed the complexity of managing the inclusion process of different stakeholders exhibiting heterogeneous information, interests, and understanding of the organisation and its objectives.

Malhotra et al. (2017) addressed the management of hostile interactions in using crowd sourcing for public consultation, and Diriker et al. (2023), in a longitudinal study focused on sustainable innovation in the maritime industry, observed how the temporal interruption of opening may be used as an organising principle in the process. Hautz et al. (2017) pointed to five paradoxes with which organisations that adopt the open strategy process have to deal. The authors based on Whittington et al. (2011), who indicated that the paradoxes centre on decisions about transparency (visibility of constructed contents) and inclusion (level of participation of internal and external players) that are contingent and depend on each situation, Hautz et al. (2017) point to the paradox of process, since increases in participation generate ambivalent effects. Although it improves quality of the contents of strategic decisions, the participation of a larger number of people makes control much more challenging and the process ends up proceeding at a slower path, being sometimes even paralysed. The second paradox is related to commitment, which may be developed through participation but may also frustrate people that hold high expectations of having their contributions accepted (Hautz et al., 2017). The third paradox, that of dissemination, centres on transparency. Transparency of process

and contents strengthens legitimacy of decisions made but may be risky, and excessive information may be inefficient and affect people’s ability to appropriate and understand the path each contribution must follow up to the final decision.

The fourth paradox relates to the fact that participants may regard their inclusion in the process as both a blessing and a burden. They may also value the fact that their opinion is being taken into consideration but, at the same time, deplore the additional work they are required to do. Finally, the fifth paradox refers to the expectation that the opening will be widened to incorporate other aspects, as a result of the initial process. Their considerations, adapted to indicate the characteristic poles of each paradox, are briefly presented by Table 1.

TABLE 1 PARADOXES OF OPEN STRATEGY

Paradox	Pole 1 of the paradox	Pole 2 of the paradox
Paradox of the process	Granting access to wider sources of knowledge	Compromising speed, flexibility and control over the strategy development process
Paradox of commitment	Creating commitment by inviting contributions	Undermining commitment due to unmet expectations about impact of contributions
Paradox of disclosure	Responding to expectations about disclosure of strategy information	Undermining competitiveness, trust and understanding
Paradox of empowerment	Granting wider audiences a say in strategy development	Burdening wider audiences with the pressures of strategy
Paradox of escalation	Realizing benefits of openness in selected areas of strategy	Creating escalating expectations about increasing openness

Source: Adapted from Hautz et al. (2017).

Although Hautz et al. (2017) use the term “dilemma” in their article, we opted for adopting the term “paradox”, which we consider to be better aligned with Smith and Lewis’ (2011, p. 382) arguments. They even make a difference between paradox and dilemma. For the authors, paradoxes are contradictory, though interrelated, elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time, Dilemmas, for their part, imply an exclusionary choice to be made by the organisation. In brief, dealing with contradictory elements and moving among extremes seem to us to be inherent in the process of open strategy, a condition that is even stronger in the context of partnerships aimed at public management, as discussed below.

The paradoxes debated in the field of open strategy may also be detected in the field of collaborative governance. This happens because collaboration consists in including different stakeholders in a process of value co-creation, which leads to paradoxes. Transparency is also an essential element of democratic contexts where legitimacy of participative planning is becoming increasingly relevant. For that purpose, it is of fundamental importance that those elected by the population are actually implementing their wishes and needs and using public resources in the best possible way (Harrison & Sayogo, 2014). Only access to information and transparency may enable social engagement and the correct use of contributions, thus ensuring genuine public participation (Arnstein, 1969) and promoting accountability.

Dyer et al. (2018) affirm that paradoxes that emerge in collaborative relationships change into tensions and may hinder value creation and appropriation, as well as the gaining of competitive advantages. Authors such as Casey and Lawless (2011) pursue this same line of reasoning when they state that an inefficient management of conflicts inherent in collaboration may lead to unsuccessful relationships. Although many authors, such as Ahola (2018) and Das and Teng (2000), have pointed to these questions, literature as a whole has made only limited progress in finding solutions.

4. PARADOXES OF OPEN STRATEGY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

This section discusses the paradoxes inherent in open strategy processes in the public sector, putting forward propositions that summarise arguments concerning the management of these paradoxes and combining the theoretical fields of open strategy and collaborative governance.

In the current context of public management, which requires structuring of collaborative governance that includes different stakeholders, the open strategy process involves more specific complexities, especially due to the peculiarities of power balance. In the field of cooperation among organisations, several paradoxes have already been detected that may lead to tensions between cooperation and competition (Zhang et al., 2017), between protection and knowledge sharing (De Fillippi & Sydow, 2016; Jarvenpaa & Majchrzak, 2016), between short and long terms (Zhang et al., 2017), and between cultural differences – diversity and similarity, autonomy and accountability, and exploitation and exploration (Úbeda et al., 2020) –, between trust and opportunism (Lado et al., 2008) and between efficiency and inclusion in decision-making processes (Diriker et al., 2023; Provan & Kenis, 2008).

Davenport and Leitch (2005) claimed that a certain ambiguity in the contents of a strategy, especially in public organisations, would be interesting for accommodating the different interests and interpretations that emerge from asymmetry. In addition, the need for transparency and inclusion, which requires the involvement of internal and external players (Pittz & Adler, 2016; Whittington et al., 2011), and the diffuse variety of stakeholders in the solution of public issues make more difficult the construction of an open strategy led by government (Torfing et al., 2019).

Thus, the paradoxes pointed by Hautz et al. (2017) become even more complex when we consider public organisations, because of the complexity of multiple challenges and the traditional resource limitations. Empirical studies on the formulation of open strategies have mostly addressed less rigid institutional contexts. In public contexts, a wide variety of players may claim their relevance and right to participation, because they are affected by collective actions. In this context, it must be taken into

consideration that stakeholders are involved and affected in many different degrees Table 2 below, presents a better identification of the peculiarities of open strategy paradoxes in the public sector.

TABLE 2 PARADOXES OF OPEN STRATEGY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Paradox	Pole 1 of the paradox	Pole 2 of the paradox
Paradox of the process	To promote collaborative interaction among players exhibiting different expectations, commitments and world views, acknowledging the interdependence of parties.	To manage limited resources that are inevitably demanded when different players participate in the process.
Paradox of commitment	To legitimate process feasibility and acceptability, focusing on communication and negotiation, on the mediation of values and on the interests of the parties.	To avoid biased participation, avoiding favouring participation of extreme and / or privileged segments by increasing their influence offering them more time, energy, knowledge and resources.
Paradox of disclosure	To regard transparent action as a fundamental principle of government accountability.	To share potentially confidential information.
Paradox of empowerment	To ensure that stakeholders may share the problems to be addressed.	To avoid that politicians and managers see themselves as decision makers, while other stakeholders consider themselves to be external passive players or critical of results.
Paradox of escalation	To promote the participation of the highest possible number of stakeholders, in order to achieve more robust and innovative decisions more adherent to the context, thus leading to greater commitment.	To take appropriate care so that the collaborative process is inclusive and, concomitantly, to avoid including players not sufficiently involved or in numbers that could make collaborative governance more difficult.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The paradox in the process mentioned by Hautz et al. (2017) comes up in the context of public management because the coordination of strategic initiatives may demand additional time and resources (Peters, 2018), especially when the complexity of the challenges is taken into consideration. According to Peters (2018), deeply rooted ideas about the policies and themes must be reconciled among players. However, in the attempt to reach common ground, the solution to problems may be worse than they could potentially be.

Open strategy may also end up being more expensive in terms of resources spent in orchestrating collaborative interaction among players who have different expectations, commitments and world views that may be hard to reconcile (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). On the other hand, Pittz and Adler (2016) argue that a critical basis for collaboration is recognition by different parties that their actions are interdependent and are connected when it comes to achieve any social goal. When these challenges

are addressed, the plurality of contributions tends to enrich the results and contribute to a more successful implementation (Elbanna et al., 2016).

Lack of capacity for managing this paradox, privileging one pole to the detriment of the other, may lead to tensions that undermine the open strategy process in the public sector. This argument is summarised by proposition 1: open strategy in the public sector requires anticipating and addressing the paradox in the process; in other words, the paradox between the scarcity of time and other resources, as well as the demand for resources generated by the need for strong collaborative interaction among different players.

The commitment-related paradox is substantially relevant and challenging, mainly in countries that have neither strong and well-organised civil societies nor collaborative tradition between public and private sectors (Torfing et al., 2019). Commitment is directly linked to legitimacy. Therefore, the chances that a process not only leads to solutions but also legitimates the feasibility and the acceptability of future steps increases, with focus on communication and negotiation, on mediation of values and on interests articulated by citizens, consumers, private sector, third sectors of society and organised civil society (Head, 2019).

If, however, commitment takes place in an unbalanced way, the process of formulation of an open strategy may result in biased participation, favouring segments or players exhibiting more extreme postures or more privileged segments of society that have more time and energy to participate, in addition to a better understanding of the resources that may help them gain greater influence over joint decisions (Innes & Booher, 2004) or promote only their own specific demands (Malhotra et al., 2017).

Those responsible to conduct the open strategy process, therefore, must find ways to manage the two poles of this paradox, so as to avoid that the interests of more developed groups participating in the process direct the results to be achieved by collaborative governance, as summarised by our proposition 2: open strategy in the public sector must anticipate and address the paradox of commitment, ensuring the inclusion in the collaborative governance process of all players and groups that have legitimate demands, avoiding, however, that specific groups illegitimately influence the decisions to their own benefit.

Although the dissemination paradox seems simpler in the public sector, since transparency is a fundamental principle for social control and governmental accountability, (Buijze, 2013), a strategic planning process involves issues that demand confidentiality (Torfing et al., 2019), and legitimacy is usually linked to perception of the quality of aspects of the governance process such as fairness, inclusion, information and others (Head, 2019). On the other hand, transparency involves the need to share information beyond the scope of a 'blog' or of reports, because demands are intensive (Pittz & Adler, 2016) and codification capacity is not equally distributed.

Pittz and Adler (2016) argue that only a fraction of a complex social problem may be apprehended by stakeholders. In addition, the authors remind us that these are social issues where, usually, the public sector bears a heavy expectation burden with regard to the results achieved by its efforts. Consequently, divulgation of the process and its contents will always be expected to influence public perception in favour of its articulators, that is, the incumbent power. Arguments related to the need to take into consideration the two poles of the dissemination paradox in the open strategy process in the public sector are summarised by proposition 3: open strategy in the public sector must anticipate and address the dissemination paradox and be sufficiently transparent with regard to the information involved and necessary for a strategic planning without, however, disseminating confidential information that

might be used by stakeholders to hinder collaborative governance or to create expectation of actions concerning decisions still under analysis that may be premature.

The paradox related to the potentially unbalanced empowerment of participants is inherent in collaborative governance. In addition, it is evident the importance of stakeholders' perceptions of values and their interest in explaining how problems are delimited, priorities are defined, and potential solutions are considered (Head, 2019). However, although these stakeholders may share the problem they want to address, they may not be connected to each other or have any interactive experience (Torfing et al., 2019), in spite of admitting that, despite inequalities of power and knowledge, the open process may become fertile ground for virtuous learning by all stakeholders (Belmondo & Sargis-Roussel, 2022).

Reaching beyond this procedural argument, Torfing et al. (2019) highlight the importance of developing public and private players' perceptions with regard to their own role in the conduction of the process and the corresponding engagement. Such understanding requires a change in an identity that is still rooted regarding the different roles, and poorly aware that we are now dealing with a new context, based on the paradigm of collaboration.

Thus, politicians and public managers traditionally tend to see themselves as sovereign decision makers who hold power to assign responsibility, while citizens believe that having paid the taxes due, may enjoy the services they are entitled to, often omitting themselves from responsibilities and being against the idea of an active involvement in the provision of public services (Torfing et al., 2019). Again, we remind readers that the need for transparency and inclusion, together with governance processes under continuous development, are intrinsic challenges of this context. We summarised this argument in proposition 4: open strategy in the public sector must anticipate and address the empowerment paradox and find ways of ensuring that stakeholders may share the solution of problems, abandoning the passive posture of external critical users of results without, however, exempting the public power from its own effective responsibility of coordinating the search for solutions to problems.

Finally, the gains in scale obtained from a focus on determined public policies or areas vis-à-vis the increased implementation of this practice in different segments and organisations, is also a paradox to be addressed. The literature dealing with collaborative governance advocates that participation of a higher number of stakeholders leads to more robust and innovative decisions, with stronger adherence to contexts, in addition to generating greater commitment. According to Ansell et al. (2020), several authors demonstrated the democratising effect of inclusion. However, there is also evidence that large groups may not be as effective in decision-making processes. To the contrary, they may lead to increases in transaction costs and reductions in the quality of deliberations.

Large groups may also make more difficult the delimitation of collaborative governance because, in such cases, it is harder to establish who is in and who is out. In addition, it increases the chances of having partners that do not involve as required. Consequently, the collaborative process may be more successful if inclusion is more selective and strategic. The paradox, however, emerges because more intensive inclusion of players also increases commitment to the success of implementation (Elbanna et al., 2016), and even when the effects directly impact the social players (Pittz & Adler, 2016).

These arguments are summarised in proposition 5: open strategy in the public sector must manage the scale paradox, ensuring inclusion of different stakeholders in order to promote decisions that are

both more robust and more adherent to the context of the public issue under consideration, without leading to the inclusion of players who are not sufficiently involved or in a number that renders the collaborative governance and the effective execution of actions more difficult.

As described, there are specificities regarding strategies in the public sector that must be taken into consideration and that deserve further investigation.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article we analysed two theoretical points of view, based on which it proposed and discussed an argument. The first theory is based on the idea that States must, by means of collaborative governance, create networks that enable the formulation of public policies and the offer of public goods in a collaborative way that includes the participation of different stakeholders. The second one addresses the benefits of greater participation of different stakeholders in the strategy formulation process.

We propose here that there are opportunities for investigations that combine these two theories. Although they have been developed independently, many of the advancements they proposed may illuminate mutual challenges. We observed that the authors linked to open strategy point to paradoxes (Hautz et al., 2017) that, according to our analysis, are comparable to those experienced in collaborative governance efforts developed by the public sector. Thus, specificities apart, the findings of multidisciplinary researches may illuminate the search for solutions for different realities.

This combination of theories is particularly relevant to the public sector, since changes in contexts and redefinition of stakeholders' roles, acting as co-participants in addressing public problems, is a road of no return. The increase in the complexity of the challenges, combined with a more active society, requires paradigmatic shifts that involve the most diverse practices of management and formulation of public policies. In this particular, Torfing et al. (2019) suggest that contributing to public solutions increases legitimacy and trust, and constitute an exercise of democracy. It also helps promote more efficacious, holistic and synergistic solution, better adapted to the hopes of citizens,

Another important factor is the creation of social capital, strengthening cohesion and enabling players to use their relations to achieve other objectives. The adoption or, even more important, the potential institutionalisation of open strategy processes contributes to such advances. To debate, deepen knowledge on, formulate and prioritise initiatives, projects and resources with the involvement of those who are really impacted may not only improve quality of decisions but also increase the availability of information and the quality of the debate itself. It may also make implementation easier, promote a sense of belonging and stimulate democracy and generation of social capital. In spite of limitations imposed by the lack of practical proof, inherent in theoretical works, the reflections herein offered contribute to both theory and practice in the field of public management. From a theoretical point of view, we have put forward, with their own specificities, five propositions that expand the literature on open strategy and paradoxes (Hautz et al., 2017), more specifically in the context of public organisations and collaborative governance. Those involved in open strategy processes and collaborative governance have to deal with these paradoxes and find ways to manage them and prevent them from becoming tensions capable of hindering collaboration. From the practical point of view, the reflections on how the antagonistic poles of these paradoxes behave and on the challenges, they pose may help public managers and stakeholders involved in collaborative governance initiatives to develop ways of managing the paradoxes and preventing harmful effects. By recognising paradoxes

and understanding their dynamics, public managers will have better tools to avoid the potential problems that tensions may create for collaboration in open strategy processes.

As mentioned by Meneghetti (2011), an essay does not require empirical proof, it rather relies on reflections by authors on reality, based on theoretical elements previously selected. In addition, our essay makes room for future studies that may further advance the reflections it presents. We suggest empirical studies that may prove the propositions herein made, by researching how public managers or collaborative governance leaders manage the paradoxes.

Such studies may investigate, for instance, what practices are adopted to prevent paradoxes from becoming harmful tensions, or what practices are employed to minimise paradoxical tensions when they emerge. Similarly, we suggest empirical studies that contribute to better understand the paradoxes described for different forms of collaborative governance, such as informal collaborative networks, public-private partnerships or inter-municipal consortia for the provision of services. It is possible that the specificity of each format influences reflections on the dynamics of paradoxes and on the possibility that harmful tensions to collaboration emerge from them.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The entire dataset supporting the results of this study was published in the article itself.