

BOUNDARY SPANNERS IN COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE: EVIDENCE FROM FLORIANÓPOLIS

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Introdução

Boundary spanners are critical players in collaborative governance (CG) for urban sustainability policy development and implementation. They act as networkers, mediators, collaborators, brokers, entrepreneurs, and facilitators, taking on these roles simultaneously or according to the context, connecting formal and informal settings and practices. Based on a case of integrated solid waste management (SWM) in Brazil, we examine individual boundary spanners and their interactions to determine how they contribute to the collaboration's outcomes.

Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo

Scholars have extensively theorized about boundary-spanning in organizations since the 1970s (Dollinger 1984), evolving to address it in public administration, particularly since 2000 (Williams, 2002). Meanwhile, in light of the complexity of global and urban environmental issues, research on governance models has also expanded, focusing primarily on institutions, policies and management. However, little attention has been given to community-based initiatives (informal) involving public administration (formal) and the roles of government officials and civil society members in CG.

Fundamentação Teórica

We searched extant boundary-spanning literature (Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos 2014, Williams 2002) that addresses management, professional expertise development, and behaviour, undertaken primarily in developed countries. We confronted these findings with studies on CG and network theories (Ulibarri et al. 2020, Ansell & Gash 2008). We aimed to understand how boundary-spanning built trust that fostered consensus building and impacted decision-making about integrated urban agriculture (UA) and solid waste management (SWM) policies in a developing country.

Metodologia

We adopted a qualitative single case study methodology to analyse a community-based initiative addressing organic waste dumping. The initiative engaged residents, public officials and activists in a collaboration that culminated in municipal legislation. Our research combines the literature review covering boundary-spanning, network and collaborative governance theories with empirical evidence obtained from the case reported in the Qualitative Collaborative Governance Case Database and semi-structured interviews with 19 selected stakeholders.

Análise dos Resultados

We have analyzed boundary-spanning behaviour in a CG initiative, including government and civil society players and their formal and informal interactions. Boundary spanners contributed to developing trust through knowledge sharing and effective communication between all participants, strengthening their engagement. The outcomes included a municipal policy to support UA, address health in vulnerable communities and improve integrated SWM. However, the collaboration was not sustained after the institutionalization stage, when the city implemented the policy and neglected public participation.

Conclusão

We observed that boundary spanners strengthened the network in the activation stage, leading to a municipal policy on UA, public health and SWM. However, the collaboration declined when key actors' roles were changed, trust was lost, and connections between the community and public officials were broken. This study contributes to research with a governance framework systematizing boundary spanners' typologies, roles, and interactions. Developing strategies to adjust their behaviour can help improve the outcomes and sustain CG arrangements beyond institutionalization.

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Palavras Chave

Boundary spanners, Collaborative governance, sustainable urban development

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