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Uncovering Micro-Practices and Pathways of Engagement That Scale Up Social-Driven Collaborations: A Practice View of Power

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ABSTRACT This paper explores how large-scale social-driven collaborations might grow in scale and help promote political change. We present the results of a qualitative investigation of a complex platform where multiple and hybrid collaborations co-exist and where civil society plays a central role. Based on a longitudinal comparative case study, we draw a processual model describing micro-practices and pathways of engagement. We show that the emergence of these collaborations requires a new type of convener, one that is able to manage the interplay between the sharing/co-creation of abundant resources and the coordinated decentralization of informal authority. Our study extends existing debates on the role of resources and authority, showing the complementarity between possession and practice perspectives of power. Finally, we identified synergies between collaboration and social movement literatures, particularly showing that large-scale collaborations could be mobilized to refine social movement agendas and achieve more purposive collective action.

Keywords: large-scale social-driven collaborations, micro-practices and pathways of engagement, possession and practice perspectives of power, social movement

INTRODUCTION

Large-scale initiatives and mobilizations addressing complex social issues have become more frequent since the beginning of the last decade. In 2003, a large-scale political coalition mobilized 41 organizations from 30 countries against the Iraq war (Corrigall-Brown and Meyer, 2010). At about the same time, the America*Speaks* organization was founded to engage American citizens in discussions of important national and regional issues (Lukensmeyer and Brigham, 2005). In this paper, we target phenomena involving the emergence of multipart and multilevel collaboration platforms where citizens, groups, and organizations from all sectors interact and form intricate networks that

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simultaneously collaborate around complex social problems. This understanding is crucial today as more and more people around the world attempt to organize themselves to address important issues that formal political authorities seem unable or disinclined to address (Batellier and Sauvé, 2011).

Given the importance of this phenomenon, more empirical research is needed to increase our understanding of the micro-practices of stakeholder engagement in such large collaborative processes. By *engagement* we mean the act of entering into contact with and beginning active participation in a given activity, process, or concerted action. It extends from the first movement toward a group of people that is organized – or in the process of being organized – to their commitment to achieving their goals. We define *micro-practices of engagement* as sets of activities, manoeuvres, and subtle tactics deployed by the promoters of the collaboration to engage different actors in debates, events, mobilizations and action-taking. We refer to micro-practices to emphasize that we are entering into the detailed actions of people's activities, scrutinizing and analyzing them to open the black box.

A number of scholars have investigated collaboration processes without taking a close look at underlying micro-practices (e.g., Gray and Stisis, 2013; Hardy and Phillips, 1998). As we explain in the literature review section, most of those authors identify generic categories but do not delve deeper to achieve a more fine-grained focus. The micro-practices of stakeholder engagement in collaborations are thus not disclosed or sufficiently explored. On the other hand, studies in other bodies of literature, such as social movement literature, detail mobilization mechanisms and protest tactics (Taylor and Van Dyke, 2004), but fail to show how those mechanisms and tactics might lead to the refinement of political agendas to improve access to government decision-making arenas. We argue for the blending of those studies to achieve a better understanding of engagement micro-practices that can help social-driven collaborations gain in scale to promote social and political change such as advances in human rights, fulfilment of basic needs, and more sustainable cities.

In addition to micro-practices, we grasped that most studies on collaboration are founded on the assumption that the main motivation for collaborating is to control formal authority and critical resources. This conceptualization of power might be characterized as being shaped by an epistemology of possession (Cook and Brown, 1999). We argue that the entire area could benefit from showing the complementary nature of the logic of possession and the logic of practice. Our rich empirical data allowed us to illustrate how such a complementarity might work. We outline two aspects of power that emerged from our practice-based analysis: the way resources and authority are managed by stakeholders.

The present study focusses on these two issues – micro-practices of engagement and role of power – and it addresses two research questions: '*What micro-practices might increase and improve engagement in large-scale social-driven collaboration processes?' and 'What is the role of power in the implementation of those micro-practices?'* The relevance of these research questions relates to the growing interest in managing collaborations that address complex social issues (Batellier and Sauvé, 2011; Everett and Jamal, 2004; Gray and Stisis, 2013; Johnston and Clegg, 2012; Selsky and Parker, 2005).

The results of our study offer three main contributions. First, we explore a complex form of social-driven collaboration, a platform where multiple and hybrid collaborations

co-exist and civil society plays a central role as a new type of convener. Second, we propose an original processual model of engagement that fosters an understanding of how large-scale social-driven collaborations might grow in scale to promote social and political change, thereby creating unexpected synergies between two bodies of literature: collaboration and social movement. Collaboration literature could learn from the rich repertoire of mobilization tactics discussed in social movement literature, which in turn could learn how large-scale and multiparty collaboration platforms can be used to refine political agendas to gain access to government decision-making arenas. Third, we extend existing debates on the role of two aspects of power in collaborations – resources and authority – showing that the dominant logic of possession prevents collaboration literature from exploring more detailed and dynamic micro-practices. We argue that an epistemology of practice helps trace micro-practices employed by highlighting an aspect of power that may be hidden when a possession view dominates: the interplay between sharing/co-creation of abundant resources and the coordinated decentralization of informal authority.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Serious issues affecting quality of life in modern society such as sustainable development, environmental health risks (unsafe food and drinking water, air pollution, chemical exposure), genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and nuclear waste disposal are triggering controversies that established political and scientific bodies seem unable to resolve (Batellier and Sauvé, 2011). Many authors suggest that ordinary citizens can and should participate in public debates and policymaking that directly affect their lives, pointing out that more studies are needed in areas such as integrating the general public in decision-making processes (Adams, 2007); participation spaces such as consensus conferences, citizen committees, and dialogue roundtables (Callon, 2004); and collaborative devices through which multiple stakeholders can come together with a common political agenda focused on societal problem-solving (Selsky and Parker, 2005).

This last point – collaboration – is particularly relevant when a management perspective is the lens of study. One widely cited definition of collaboration around multi-party problems is that of Gray (1989, p. 5): the 'process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible.' From the various angles from which civil society's engagement in societal problem-solving may be investigated, we therefore decided to adopt social-driven collaboration as our central lens (Hibbert and Huxham, 2010; Kieser and Leiner, 2012). In addition, as we discuss in the following sections, we found interesting synergies between collaboration and social movement literatures.

Social-Driven Collaboration Literature

While much of collaboration literature looks at organizational issues and cases focused on benefits to stakeholders and the effects on competitive advantage (e.g., Ring and Van De Ven, 1994), other studies address societal issues at the core of the collaborative

initiatives being investigated. Various levels of complexity emerge in terms of collaborations among networks of heterogeneous entities coping with multi-party problems (Gray, 1989; Turcotte and Pasquero, 2001). Overarching efforts to integrate multiple initiatives are necessary since relevant societal issues overlap various institutions and sectors of society (Bryson et al., 2006).

Certain key concepts recur in this literature. First, broad collaborations are created around *meta-problems*, using Trist's (1983) term, i.e., broad and complex societal, multi-party problems that are beyond the capacity of a single organization to address and, therefore, require supra-organizational collaboration. Examples of meta-problems where collaborative approaches are used include criminal justice, drug abuse, environmental concerns, and community development (Eden and Huxham, 2001). The second important concept is the role of *referent* (Trist, 1983) or *convener* (Dorado, 2005). They are defined as organizations or individuals that activate processes of change (Dorado, 2005), facilitate collaboration formation (Gray, 1989) and lead processes of regulation, appreciation, and support (Trist, 1983). They serve as bridges that assemble or manage cross-sector relationships (Selsky and Parker, 2005) and negotiate bilaterally with key stakeholders (Westley and Vredenburg, 1991). In addition, conveners are seen as those who have or exercise their power by providing 'access to key resources and templates for action' (Montgomery et al., 2012, p. 384), creating the conditions to build sufficient commitment of resources in inter-organizational domains (Dorado and Vaz, 2003).

In this study, we are interested in large-scale social-driven collaborations, collaborative arrangements involving a network of heterogeneous stakeholders from different sectors. The term 'stakeholder' refers both to citizens participating as individuals and to organized groups and businesses (Ansell and Gash, 2008). A large and complex stream of literature was identified, including a diversity of sub-themes such as social problem-solving interventions (Hood et al., 1993), social partnership (Waddock, 1989), collaborative design (Gray, 1989), supra-organizational collaborations (Pasquero, 1991), catalytic alliances (Waddock and Post, 1995); multi-organizational collaboration (Eden and Huxham, 2001), cross-sector partnership (Gray and Stisis, 2013; Selsky and Parker, 2005), collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash, 2008), tripartite social interactions (Seitanidi and Lindgreen, 2010) and multi-stakeholder collaboration (Turcotte and Pasquero, 2001)

Behind this diversity of terms, two levels of collaboration are recognized: *cross-sector* and *multi-sector*. At the cross-sector level, three main types of relationship are recognized: government-business (e.g., Selsky and Parker, 2005), government-non-profit (e.g., Salamon, 1995) and business-non-profit (e.g., Austin and Seitanidi, 2012b). Multi-sector collaborations occur when the social problems addressed are complex and require the involvement of organizations in different sectors (Austin and Seitanidi, 2012a). They may take various forms, including round tables, policy dialogues, and collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash, 2008).

These studies share a common assumption: the main motivation for collaborating is to leverage limited resources (Waddock and Post, 1995) and to acquire and control critical resources (Hardy et al., 2003). Power differences between players are due in part to their varying ability to mobilize scarce resources, meaning that understanding power and resource 'imbalances' (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Selsky and Parker, 2005) or

'asymmetries' (Seitanidi and Lindgreen, 2010) is crucial to understanding the dynamics of collaboration among stakeholders in different sectors. Bryson et al. (2006) refer to Gray's (1989) concept of power, according to which power issues as prime sources of conflict may vary depending on the collaboration stage, making the control of resources and the power to authorize actions relevant in later stages, when the collaboration is already underway. This shared assumption invites us to explore the role of power.

Large-Scale Collaborations and the Role of Power

The overwhelming majority of authors dealing with large-scale collaborations associate power with formal authority and control of critical resources. In addition, their theorizing is situated within an epistemology of possession. The use of the term epistemology of possession is linked to an important discussion led by Cook and Brown (1999) and Marshall and Rollinson (2004) in the organizational studies literature dealing with the complementarity of possession and practice epistemologies or views.

Power, in a possession perspective, is something that is possessed, being a capacity and a property of actors. Its status is that of a resource external to the individual, which nonetheless produces constraint and distortion and allows domination to occur. It is employed by one individual or group vis-à-vis others (Marshall and Rollinson, 2004). Thus, power is associated with authority and decision-making prerogatives (Astley and Sachdeva, 1984). A possession lens suggests that the power held by individuals or groups corresponds to the extent of their formal authority and their control of access to resources (Contu and Willmott, 2003). Ownership, authority, and resources are things that can be allocated along hierarchical lines (Fincham, 1992). We contend that the majority of studies in large-scale social-driven collaboration literature treat power as an important and often crucial concept for grasping the dynamics of collaboration, and such a conceptualization of power clearly reflects a logic of possession.

Hardy and Phillips (1998) illustrate our argument well when they highlight two important aspects of power: formal authority – the recognized, legitimate right to make a decision – and control of critical resources – entailing the ability to exercise dominion over scarce or critical resources. The relationship between formal authority and control of resources is formulated from a perspective of possession. Two main logics are important here.

First, authority and resources – seen as constituting power – are recognized as things that *someone has*. Hardy and Phillips (1998) refer to 'who has formal authority, who controls key resources' (p. 217); they often see collaborations as means of 'acquiring resources' (p. 217); they note that 'resources may be concentrated in the hands of one participant' (p. 218); they refer to situations where organizations 'possess neither formal authority nor critical resources' (p. 219); and, even more clearly they mention that a given entity 'does not have any formal authority [. . .] but it does possess resources – expertise, money, experience, etc.' (p. 222) that other entities do not have. These quotes are representative of the logic presented throughout the paper and clearly illustrate the possession epistemology. Similar quotes dominate the conceptualization of power across large-scale social-driven collaboration literature, such as: 'if an organization is sufficiently powerful through, for example, having significant resources to offer the group, it

may engage in an episode that succeeds in shifting the joint agenda' (Eden and Huxham, 2001, p. 383); or 'businesses are viewed as having more power because of their greater resources [. . .]' (Selsky and Parker, 2005, p. 857).

Second, the prevailing dimension of authority is one that is formally recognized and invested with the legitimate right to make a decision – thus, something that, when maintained, is a source of power. Similarly, resources – such as expertise, money, equipment, information – are seen as critical and scarce – even rare – hence, something which control also represents a source of power. Taken together, these two points – the logic of possession and its corollary, the conceptualization of authority as formal and resources as critical, scarce – shape the role of power in large collaborations as something that is possessed, that is balanced or unbalanced, and that referents or conveners hold or do not hold. In short, power is seen as related to the ability to guarantee positions of authority and control resources. Even authors that emphasize more decentralized or fragmented collaborations, such as Westley and Vredenburg (1997), tend to see power, authority and resources from a possession view. They refer to allocation, dispersion, and balances of power, and they see as challenges the securing of sufficient resources for keeping convener authority.

The main consequence of dominance of one epistemology – in this case the possession view – is a loss in terms of possibilities of understanding. The practice view provides a different and distinct view of power that seems to be neglected by the possession view. These two positions are not mutually exclusive but, rather, complementary (Cook and Brown, 1999; Marshall and Rollinson, 2004). A practice view assumes that power is inseparable from the context of action in which it is created, produced, reproduced, and transformed. Foucault suggests that power exists only in action and can be conceived of as a complex set of relationships in a particular society (Foucault, 1980). Power is not something that is acquired or seized, held or possessed, or embodied in a person, structure, or institution, but is relational. Practice views conceptualize power as constitutive of – and exercised through – a wide range of micro-practices, relations, manoeuvres, and techniques (Marshall and Rollinson, 2004). We suggest that there is considerable potential for a more relational view of power in collaboration literature.

Micro-Practices and Pathways of Engagement: Synergies Between Collaboration and Social Movements Literatures

In cross- and multi-sector literatures, the analysis of practices used to initiate or structure complex arrangements is discussed by authors exploring the phases or stages of a collaborative process, particularly formation and implementation. Bouwen and Taillieu (2004) present a sequence of activities within three critical tasks of multi-party collaboration processes: definition of the issue and problem setting, direction setting and problem solving, and implementation. Other authors explore the tactics adopted by key actors in collaboration processes. Carlson (1999), for example, notes that conveners can use certain tactics to bring participants into a discussion, like videotapes and simulations, to identify and include participants in consensus building. Huxham (2003) mentions the leadership activities that participants in collaborative initiatives may engage in, such as embracing, empowering, involving and mobilizing. Additional examples can be found

in Austin and Seitanidi (2012b), Bryson et al. (2006), Gray (1989), Waddock (1989), and, more recently, Gray and Stisis (2013). Although offering a rich repertory, collaboration literature is sketchy about *how* those mechanisms, processes, and interactions are linked to each other and can lead to political and social change. It was in social movements, since it has long been interested in that topic, that we found studies with the potential to contribute to collaboration literature.

Social movement theory is interested in processes of mobilization and collective action (Schneiberg and Lounsbury, 2008) and in the diversity of strategies used by social movements to affect the political and corporate environment (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2013). The multiple strategies and tactics identified – whether non-confrontational (boycotts, lawsuits, letter-writing campaigns, lobbying, petitions, etc.) or confrontational (vigils, marches, strikes, illegal actions, etc.) – present three common features: contestation, intentionality, and the construction of a collective identity (Taylor and Van Dyke, 2004). In organization studies, what primarily captures the interest of researchers are processes aimed at confronting established organizations and institutions (Soule, 2013). The mechanisms affecting collaboration within and across these social movements can be classified into three broad categories: relational, cognitive, and environmental (Davis et al., 2005). In our study, relational and cognitive mechanisms proved to be particularly relevant.

Relational mechanisms – primarily formal and informal mobilization structures – refer both to ways actors are brought together to produce social and political change and to ways resources of various kinds – money, skills, people – are allocated. They include the choice of agenda, tactics for selecting leaders, and strategies for mobilizing resources (Diani, 2013). An example of a relational mechanism is 'mesomobilization': the mobilization of groups and organizations that coordinate and integrate 'micromobilization' groups. These mechanisms provide a 'structural integration by connecting groups with each other, collecting resources, preparing protest activities, doing public relations and a cultural integration in developing a common frame of meaning' (Gerhard and Rucht, 1992, p. 558). Cognitive mechanisms are those related to ways of thinking that can promote change. They refer to the central processes of framing, such as the creation and manipulation of meaning to guide interpretations of the world, including problems and their possible solutions. Framing processes are central to mobilizing strategies (Benford and Snow, 2000) since they fashion shared understandings of the world, legitimate and motivate collective action (McAdam et al., 1996), establish the boundaries of social movements (Diani, 2013), and foster a common identity (Taylor, 2013). Snow (2013) argues that mechanisms of framing or boundary construction might be symbolic, but they also include tactics based on the use of physical settings such as protest placards, specific clothing, and body markings.

In recent years, an emerging perspective within social movement theory offers some clues to grasping new dynamics of contentions influenced by new and complex social contexts (van Stekelenburg and Roggeband, 2013). Part of this literature focuses on coalitions or situations where 'two or more social movement organizations work together on a common task' (Van Dyke and McCammon, 2010, p. xiv). Diani (2013) explains that coalitions and social movements represent two different modes of coordination of collective action. Each of these modes includes a combination of mechanisms: different

forms of resource allocation, decision-making, and representative processes, and diverse ways of forging identities. While the coalitional and social movement modes of coordination may be similar in terms of resource allocation, they are different 'in the nature and scope of boundary definition mechanism. In contrast to social movements, the boundary work taking place in coalitions is temporary and locally circumscribed' (Diani, 2013, p. 154). In addition, coalitions often have an instrumental, goal-oriented nature and are originally set up by organizations focusing on their own identity. For instance, 'Win without war,' a large-scale political coalition that organized the world's largest protest movement (Van Dyke and McCammon, 2010), mobilized activists from 41 groups in 30 countries with a specific short-term objective: to coordinate opposition to the war in Iraq (Corrigall-Brown and Meyer, 2010). In short, the concept of coalition helps to analyze new types of alliance that mobilize different actors (Walgrave, 2013). The fact that coalitions bring together organizations with diverse identities and tactical goals invites the examination of factors facilitating the underlying collaboration (Beamish and Luebbers, 2009). Here is an unexpected convergence of social movement literature, collaboration literature, and our empirical phenomenon. The two bodies of work explored here – social-driven collaboration and social movement – have convergent interests in collaboration processes. However, social movement literature has delved more deeply into deployed mechanisms, networks, and coalitions.

We argue that an interesting bridge can be built between social movements and collaboration literatures. Furthermore, our investigation answers recent calls for more research, as the one of Austin and Seitanidi (2012a, p. 19), who suggest that there 'is a need for field-based research that documents specific value creation *pathways*' and 'one needs to document *how* the co-creation process operates, renews, and grows' [italics added]. Pathways refer to courses of action or paths leading to a given result (Kipping and Kirkpatrick, 2013).

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

To answer our research questions, we focused on South America, where an emerging phenomenon has been attracting attention: the innovative participatory movement known as the 'network of cities.' Since its 2001 launch in Bogota – more than 70 other cities in ten South American countries have joined the network (RED, 2013). In each of those cities, citizens and local organizations interested in discussing problems and alternative solutions have begun a process of collaboration. The problems addressed may vary – health, transportation, housing, population, education – but they are all linked to quality of life and sustainability at the municipal level. Among the initiatives raised by the network of cities, we focus on the largest: the *Nossa São Paulo Network*, or simply NSP. In a city of 18 million, NSP acts on behalf of people in almost 700 organizations of varied sizes and types, including NGOs, neighbourhood associations, foundations, unions, pastoral groups, universities, and private companies. NSP mobilizes various segments of society to draw up and secure commitment to an agenda and a set of goals promoting actions designed to make the city of São Paulo socially and politically more equitable and sustainable.

We formulated a qualitative, comparative longitudinal case design based on our primary goal of identifying recurrent patterns. Our methodological design was strongly influenced by the work of Pettigrew (1990) and Langley (1999). From this perspective, process research is concerned with understanding 'how things evolve over time and why they evolve in that way' (Langley, 1999, p. 692). Process data consist largely of stories about what happened and who did what when – events and activities ordered over time. Longitudinal comparisons are important for recognizing patterns of events and understanding how and why things evolve in a particular way (Pettigrew et al., 2001)

The choice of NSP as a platform of comparative embedded case studies was guided primarily by theoretical considerations and our two research questions. This choice was justified by three main factors. First, among more than 70 civil society initiatives undertaken in South America's 'network of cities,' NSP is widely acknowledged to be the largest and most relevant. Second, the numerous social changes and political successes that NSP is achieving make it a reference for other Brazilian and South American cities seeking to deal collectively with large societal issues at the municipal level. These include the creation of an accessible database – the Citizen Observatory – including performance indicators of the city's sub-municipalities and the passing of a municipal law obliging the city's elected mayor to present a precise work plan with transparent indicators. These achievements have inspired and encouraged similar networks in other Brazilian cities. The third factor is our ready access to rich empirical material, since one of the principles of NSP is transparency and the availability of information to all citizens at all times. One of our researchers has been following and documenting NSP since its inception.

Within the NSP platform, where complex and multiple events and processes develop at the same time, we identified five cases for data analysis. Each case is a collaboration embedded in the platform and composed of a *chain of events* whose outputs represent important *achievements* for the network. In each of these chains of events, we identified the nature and form of the micro-practices implemented. An achievement means something that is accomplished, including advances in human rights, access to basic needs, legislative changes, legal battles, or putting simply, a social and political change. We identify 'achievements' based on our interpretation of claims made by NSP members in electronic communications, but we 'triangulate' those claims with interviews and media research. This design is similar to that of several studies applying and recommending this type of process-based logic (Langley and Abdallah, 2011).

The Context of the NSP Platform

NSP is a large-scale collaboration platform established among heterogeneous social actors. It was formally launched in 2007 in the multiethnic megalopolis of São Paulo. As stated on the network's website, NSP's mission centres on the collaboration of different sectors: 'to mobilize different segments of society, in partnership with public and private institutions, to build and commit to an agenda and a set of goals and to articulate and promote actions aiming to achieve a fairer and sustainable São Paulo' (NSP, 2013). NSP's main goal is the creation of a democratic space for dialogue about the quality of life currently offered to residents and their future. NSP stakeholders may be individuals,

but very often they represent or speak for groups and organizations in all sectors. At any given time, a number of different collaborations co-exist, each varying in terms of number and nature of components, making heterogeneity and hybridization important features of the network. Another important element is that, although NSP lies at the heart of a social movement that emerged in the city of São Paulo and is part of a broader South American movement, NSP itself is not a social movement. NSP is a network – a platform of collaborations coordinated by a small non-profit entity and a designated number of working groups that give life to and continuously energize the network.

What sets NSP apart from most collaborations we have seen is its huge scope and permeable, changing boundaries. First, the network's broad range is striking, with more than 700 official members of various kinds. Their participation at any given time depends on the issues at stake, however. In addition, citizens who are not officially part of any of those 700 organizations may still participate. For that reason, it can be challenging to determine who is inside and who is outside the network. The boundaries are fluid, permeable, and malleable, with people and organizations engaging or withdrawing at will. This moving platform catalyzes various agenda-settings and campaigns with diverse collaborations developing and evolving simultaneously and dynamically. Because of this hallmark heterogeneity of the NSP network platform, we define it as a *large-scale social-driven collaboration*.

Our first step in understanding the context of NSP consisted of identifying the actors and groups of actors and their respective roles in creating and developing the NSP network. Although citizens participate in the network individually, they usually represent the interests, values, and needs of an entity such as a neighbourhood, professional association, university, union, or NGO. These entities are asked to sign a document of public support for the network and, as of February 2013, nearly 700 had done so (NSP, 2013). Figure 1 illustrates the complex linkages characterizing the NSP network. Within the dotted line are those we call the internal stakeholders, i.e., engaged social actors and groups that make up the network – while outside the dotted line are the external

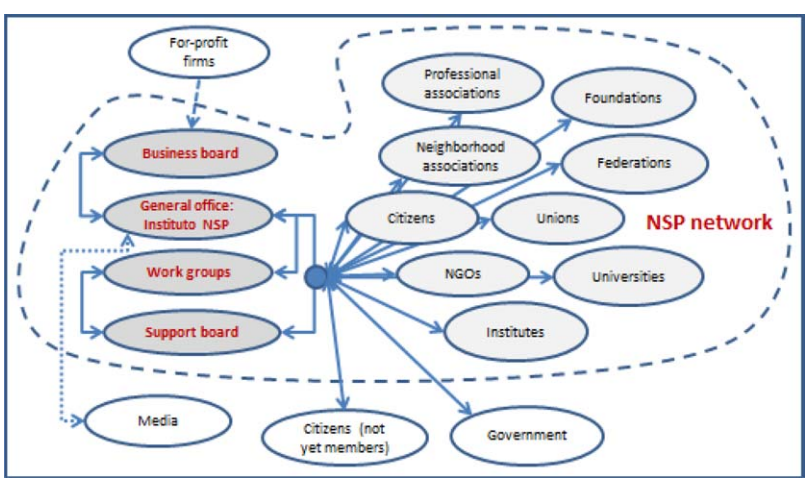

Figure 1. NSP: a collaboration platform connecting heterogeneous actors

stakeholders – those that the NSP network relates to, interacts with, applies pressure to, or attempts to engage with.

The financial contributions needed to lay the groundwork for the NSP network were provided by a group of socially proactive entrepreneurs. This group, which financially supports the network's infrastructure, forms the *business board* and today numbers around 30 donors from for-profit firms. For coordination purposes, the NSP network has a general office known as *ISPS* (Instituto São Paulo Sustentável) or simply *Instituto NSP*, which functions as a small non-profit entity with 17 members. The business board began meeting in January 2007, and the Instituto NSP was created in May 2007 to coincide with the official launching of the network. Drawing on the heterogeneous pool of social actors taking part in NSP, a number of *working groups* were set up to meet regularly and define the network's priorities. Over time, 18 working groups were formed from a pool of participants: social leaders, socially oriented entrepreneurs, and citizens representing different entities. Each working group was organized around a specific concern such as education, health, the environment, or housing. Finally, the *support board* consists of a number of top-level social leaders who provide guidance and recommendations to the network.

In addition to internal stakeholders, we identified key external stakeholders: *governments* (mainly the São Paulo municipal government, although sometimes the state and federal governments enter debates), São Paulo *citizens* (those not yet directly involved in the network), the *media*, and *for-profit firms*. The business board, composed of entrepreneurs representing for-profit firms, cannot directly participate in the network's decision-making processes. Furthermore, to maintain its legitimacy as an independent representative of civil society, NSP does not allow official representatives of any political party, government, or political institution to join the network.

Data Collection

The main sources of data collection were electronic communications, interviews with key participants in the NSP network, participant observations, and public documents (Table I).

The richest source of empirical material was the electronic communications sent by NSP every week, an average of eight documents per month, which we have been systematically collecting since the launching of the network. For the purposes of this paper, we coded a portion of them: those from February 2008 until June 2009. These electronic communications include three kinds of documents: newsletters (43 per cent of total communications), invitations (19 per cent) and calls for mobilization (38 per cent).

Newsletters are the longest documents, averaging 11 pages each and containing a variety of information. They represent the most important means of communication both internally (among NSP members) and externally (between NSP and municipal residents who are not necessarily engaged). All relevant events taking place during the week or being planned are reported in those newsletters. The other two types of electronic communication are more specific. Invitations, no more than one page each, are used to invite individuals and organizations to participate in activities organized by NSP. They specify the type of activity (e.g., conference, book launch, presentation of successful

Table I. Summary of data collection

Data sources	*Description*	*Period*	*Role*
Electronic communications	96 documents (newsletters, invitations, and calls for mobilization)	February 2008 to June 2009	Main source of data (more than 1000 pages of excerpts) for coding and identification of micro-practices
Interviews	6 in-depth interviews	October to December 2008	Important for building the history of the network, validating achievements, and understanding the roles of stakeholders
Participant observation	Field notes from participation in public forums organized by NSP	Two periods: September/November 2008 and September/November 2009.	Important for understanding the dynamics of interactions among the stakeholders
Public documents	Annual reports, websites, books, articles in the media, etc.	Between the launching of the network (May 2007) and the time we started the data analysis (July 2011)	Important for completing the history of the network, establishing the chronology of main events, and corroborating information found in electronic communications

campaign results etc.), information about the subject, and other general information including location and schedule of participants (e.g., government officials, experts). The third type of electronic document, calls for mobilization, is more provocative, explaining why individuals should participate in specific political activities (e.g., protests in front of City Hall to support environmental legislation). These two types of document – invitations and calls for mobilization – are distributed primarily through two channels: mailing lists and the local press.

In addition to all the electronic communications sent by NSP, we collected secondary data published on the NSP website and material distributed by local and national media. We also analyzed the annual reports published by NSP since 2007. Finally, one of the researchers carried out six interviews with NSP coordinators and members to gain a deeper understanding of the network's history. The interviews were an average of two hours each and were held with two members of the general office, two members of the support board, and two members of working groups. The same researcher took notes on a number of occasions when she acted as a participant observer at public meetings and forums organized by NSP in 2008 and 2009. Figure 2 summarizes the timeline of this research project, showing the chronology of the embedded cases identified and described in the next section.

Although our intent to adopt a process-oriented perspective might be questioned by the use of electronic documents as an important data source, a quick look at the content

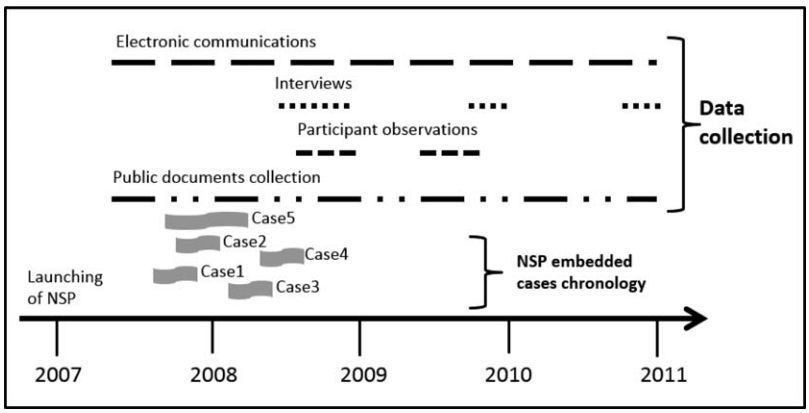

Figure 2. Research project timeline

of those materials confirms the validity of this choice: they are lively accounts of actions and interactions between the network participants. Indeed, this type of data corresponds to what process-based authors such as Pettigrew (1990) and Langley (1999) suggest as enabling an understanding of how things evolve over time. Processual analysis deals with sequences of 'events'. The analysis of process data requires a means of conceptualizing events and of detecting patterns among them. The researcher attempts to document as fully as possible the sequence of events related to the processes being studied. These electronic communications provide detailed accounts of all types of activity (event) carried out within the network as well as all strategies employed to involve and mobilize citizens. They were produced weekly, providing real time accounts of events. This is even richer, for processual analysis, than retrospective interviews, where one has to rely on the respondents' memories to reconstruct processes. The visual mapping we built with data extracted from more than 1000 pages of newsletters, invitations, and calls for mobilization allowed us to reconstruct, in detail, the chain of events over 17 months. Data from interviews, participant observation, and public documents were useful for a thorough understanding of the context and history of the network, as well as for triangulation of the findings emerging from the electronic document coding.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was carried out in four phases and combined visual mapping (Langley, 1999) and inductive theorizing (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991).

First phase – data exploration and identification of embedded cases. All the empirical material – electronic communications, interview transcripts, research notes, and documents – was integrated into NVivo software for qualitative analysis. After a first reading of the entire corpus of data, we identified five important 'critical points' (Glesne, 1999), e.g., relevant and important achievements accomplished by the NSP network. We retrospectively tracked the chain of events leading to those critical points, scrutinizing how things evolved over time in a detailed and granular manner. This is in line with Pettigrew's (1990) guidelines for performing longitudinal comparative case study work: identifying

several chains of incidents of events to compare. Each chain of events became an embedded case. Our comparative dataset is thus composed of five embedded cases of collaboration within the same context. The rationale for this selection was our aim of identifying *what* micro-practices of engagement and pathways might lead to those achievements, and *how*. The achievements worked as focal points, anchors for the data analysis.

Second phase – first inductive coding. Within each embedded case (within-case analysis), we began an open coding process, looking for relevant words and phrases that show *who* (key concerned actors, i.e., individuals, groups, or organizations), *what* (micro-practices, i.e., recognizable activities, manoeuvres, and tactics) and *how* (types of interaction among actors). We also paid attention to how resources and authority were mobilized by those actors in those practices (the role of power). We initially labelled this information with 'in vivo' terms and phrases found in the entire corpus of data. After this initial coding, we returned to the data to refine and regroup our codes, this iterative work allowing us to establish a single set of 'first-order' themes (e.g., Corley and Gioia, 2004; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). After completing the open coding analysis of each embedded case, we produced preliminary lists of activities, manoeuvres, and tactics – the invaluable 'events' of a process analysis – which constituted the raw material for the subsequent phases.

Third phase – visual mapping. To better understand the processes and dynamics of the embedded cases, we employed visual mapping techniques (Langley, 1999) of the five chains of events (embedded cases) and preliminarily identified patterns in each case (visual within-case analysis). Based on our first-order themes for each of the five embedded cases, we built a chronological reconstruction of all the events leading to a 'critical point' or achievement (still a within-case analysis), plotting the data in flow charts, inspired by a number of articles that have successfully applied this technique (Meyer, 1991; Stensaker and Langley, 2010). As Langley points out, these graphical representations are useful 'because they allow the simultaneous representation of a large number of dimensions, and they can easily be used to show precedence, parallel process, and the passage of time' (Langley, 1999, p. 700).

Fourth phase – comparative and inductive theorizing. Following the generation of a single set of first-order themes, we applied *axial coding* techniques to link and inter-relate them. This analysis allowed us to simplify and refine the categories, leading to second-order categories at a higher level of abstraction (Corley and Gioia, 1994; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). This passage from first to second order allowed us to produce a more robust set of categories of *micro-practices of engagement*. Analyzing and comparing our five visual maps (cross-case analysis), we tried to identify pathways, i.e., sequences of micro-practices, that recurrently appeared in different embedded cases. We carried out these comparisons several times in an iterative and constant manner until achieving what is termed a degree of data saturation. We arrived at a limited number of aggregate or core categories – three – serving to summarize the elements of an emerging theoretical model. The result is a 'processual model of engagement,' as we explain in the results.

Appendices 1a and 1b show two of the visual maps. For reasons of space, we cannot reproduce all the visual maps and cross-case tables with quotes that led us to recognize recurrent patterns and to claim that their interdependent presence helps to explain NSP's achievements. This analysis suggests that when the three pathways were present recurrently and in an intertwined manner, it was easier to locate a critical point in the visual mapping of events.

RESULTS

Presenting the Five Embedded Cases

The five embedded cases and the respective achievements that gave them their name are Citizens' Lab, Work Plan, NSP Forum, Sulfur Campaign, and 10 Proposals Commitment.

Case 1 – citizens' lab. The Citizens' observatory or laboratory is a web portal launched in January 2008 by NSP. It provides access to 130 quality of life performance indicators for the city (by neighbourhood) in terms of health, education, environment, housing, etc. These indicators serve as a tool for groups fighting for improvement. Through public consultations and after several months of discussion, a first set of indicators was identified by the working groups. They were completed, assessed, and approved during several activities open to all citizens. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and processed. At the same time, NSP mobilized technicians to build a web portal accessible to all. To raise awareness of these indicators among citizens and civil society and political representatives, partnerships with other organizations were formed and several outreach activities were organized (seminars, discussions, publications, etc.). Since then, NSP has been responsible for updating the indicators and for ensuring their distribution.

Case 2 – work plan. In February 2008, after several months of intense effort and pressure tactics by the NSP network, a new municipal law was passed at SP's City Hall obliging each elected mayor of São Paulo to announce a plan with specific goals and indicators for each area of municipal administration three months after taking office. The Work Plan project was presented by NSP in August 2007. The proposal was signed by 400 organizations and presented to City Hall representatives. At the same time, NSP organized an intense lobbying effort to win the support of City Hall administrators. Backed by well-known figures, they also ran an awareness campaign and undertook various mobilization efforts targeting citizens. The main objective was to promote greater consistency between election platforms and actions taken by elected mayors as well as to enable the public to evaluate and monitor actions taken, work done, and services provided by the municipal executive. São Paulo's experience served as an example to other Brazilian states, where similar changes to municipal laws were promoted by civil society organizations.

Case 3 – NSP forum. The first NSP Forum took place in May 2008, with the participation of more than 750 members. The main purpose was to prepare an action plan for

the city. Since January 2008, at the initiative of NSP member organizations, nearly 60 open meetings were held in different areas of the city. These meetings, run by community organizations, universities, and companies, aimed to raise public awareness, create a space for people to express their needs, and solicit proposals for solutions of public interest issues. The proposals put forward by various stakeholders in the city (company employees, union members, university students, etc.) were collected by NSP's working groups. At the same time, NSP conducted an intensive citizen mobilization campaign inviting residents to participate in the 'first NSP Forum: Proposals for an equitable and sustainable city.' More than 1500 suggestions were received during this process and a consensual list was produced for candidates in municipal elections. Many debates were held to explore the proposals. The forum also served to set up the Brazilian Network of cities and to consolidate the Latin American Network.

Case 4 – sulfur campaign. In September 2008, after a month-long campaign to force oil and gas companies to comply with legislation regulating sulfur content in diesel fuel, an agreement was signed by the federal government and oil companies. In May 2008, in collaboration with other social movement organizations, NSP had launched a mobilization campaign aimed at pressuring federal authorities, oil companies, and car manufacturers to reduce the amount of sulfur in diesel fuel. In September 2008, the campaign was intensified in response to pressure by the largest Brazilian oil company to postpone enactment of the legislation to 2012. A petition was prepared, signed by 1500 social actors (individuals, civil society organizations, companies), letters were sent to the multinational firms involved (Volvo, Scania, Mercedes, Volkswagen, Ford) informing them that they could face prosecution, and the board of directors of Petrobras was contacted. The movement obtained the support of well-known figures (athletes, artists, and business people) and alternative proposals were sent to the government and companies involved. On 10September, the federal government decided to enforce the resolution for the Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo metropolitan areas. NSP and the other civil society organizations then held seminars, workshops, and debates to raise awareness of this success and call for reduced sulfur content in all regions of the country.

Case 5 – ten proposals commitment. In October 2008, the two remaining candidates in the second round of municipal elections signed a document containing ten proposals developed by NSP, committing to transparency and ethical municipal management. They also committed to submit and to follow work plans. To achieve this success, in collaboration with other civil society organizations, NSP had mobilized citizens and held many activities (e.g., seminars, debates) to discuss and distribute the proposals. They launched a mass media advertising campaign to educate citizens about their rights and responsibilities. In addition, through working groups, they systematized citizens' demands made during the previous months and drafted a letter pledging commitment to democratic and transparent municipal management.

Pathways and Micro-Practices of Engagement

The systematic comparison of the five embedded cases allowed us to build the data structure illustrated in Figure 3 (Cf. Corley and Gioia, 2004). The first-order themes are

Figure 3. Overview of data structure

detailed activities, tactics, and manoeuvres identified in our data. The second-order themes gave rise to eight categories of micro-practices of engagement: *bombarding*, *targeting*, *facilitating*, *deliberating*, *elaborating*, *disclosing*, *proposing*, and *partnering*. These sets of micro-practices of engagement encompass actions and interactions deployed to increase and enhance heterogeneous actors' involvement and participation during the collaboration

process. The richness of this identification of micro-practices lies in its emergent character: it is grounded in the iterative and systematic analysis of empirical data. The eight second-order themes were clustered according to three aggregate categories – *mobilizing*, *organizing*, and *acting* – that we termed pathways of engagement.

1) Mobilizing pathway. The first pathway comprises *bombarding* and *targeting*. Together, these micro-practices help involve the largest possible number of actors and bring them closer to NSP, thereby increasing the scale of the network.

Using bombarding micro-practices, NSP educates people about issues. Assuming its role as convener, NSP widely distributes information, seeking to persuade the maximum number of participants – including citizens, media, for-profit and non-profit organizations, and government (municipal authorities and candidates for municipal election) – to get on board with the main items on the NSP's political agenda. One example of mobilization through *bombarding* micro-practices was the launching of a major advertising campaign encouraging citizens to ensure their rights were respected through the enforcement of existing laws.

> 'NSP has launched an advertising campaign that aims to explain to citizens from São Paulo that, according to the Organic Municipal Law, the elected candidate has a responsibility to fulfil promises made during his election campaign (.) An advertising campaign with the provocative slogan "Proposals: yes; Blah, blah: no" was created.' (CASE5: Newsletter, July 23, 2008).

Bombarding micro-practices work like a 'machine gun', 'discharging' invitations and calls for mobilization, using web-based platforms, sending documents, abundantly sharing information, triggering conversations, making phone calls, placing radio spots, and generally casting an extensive web of people, objects, and artifacts that results in 'overloading' – in a manner of speaking – the population in a provocative way, with a view to generating a reaction.

Our analysis shows that not all tactics and manoeuvres designed to convince and persuade targeted the entire population. Targeting micro-practices also aimed to involve and convince. The main difference between the two types of micro-practice is that bombarding micro-practices are more general, attempting to reach a large number of social actors, while *targeting* micro-practices are more purposeful, pursuing targeted actors or groups with specific and well-defined objectives. The way targeted actors are 'contacted' is also more aggressive than when everyone is targeted. One example is that of the month-long sulfur campaign whereby NSP led a campaign to force oil and automotive companies to obey the law regarding sulfur content in diesel fuel.

> 'The mobilization to collect signatures for the petition for diesel with less sulfur content continues. So far there have been more than 1500 endorsements by individuals and corporations. Among authorities and public figures who have signed the petition are Adib Jatene, Eduardo Jorge, Dom Odilo Scherer, Abram Szajman, Alencar Burti, Rai, Ana Moser, Mary Alice Setubal, Almir Pazianoto. Social

> movement organizations and companies are also part of the list (. . .)' (CASE4 Newsletter, 19 September, 2008).

In the above example, the manoeuvre was to convince well-known people such as soccer players (Rai), volleyball champions (Ana Moser), cardinals (Dom Odilo Scherer) and entrepreneurs (Adib Jatene) to indicate their support and participate in public events where the definition of an 'issue', a meta-problem, was under construction. It should be noted that although NSP was the referent, or convener, the network did not monopolize resources – primarily timely, relevant information – but shared them as much as it could to legitimize arguments for the construction of a domain.

The role of power in mobilizing pathways: We observe two important aspects of power operating behind this pattern. On the one hand, NSP – acting as convener – holds and uses its formal authority to mobilize people around multi-party societal problems and to convince them to engage in political debates. On the other hand, NSP does not view resources as limited or scarce but as abundant and so does not try to control those resources but to share them as much as possible.

Organizing pathway. The second pathway encompasses three types of micro-practices: *facilitating*, *deliberating*, and *elaborating*. Organizing is achieved because the combination of these three micro-practices allows actors – already engaged by mobilizing – to meet, decide, and produce proposals, documents, and political tools.

Facilitating micro-practices are quite different from the previous two types. They include initiatives where NSP provided favourable conditions and shared equipment, expertise, and infrastructure for its members' interaction with multiple and heterogeneous external actors (e.g., social movement organizations, companies, unions, schools), facilitating their joint work. One example was a target seminar about public policies and the social control of urban interventions in São Paulo.

> 'To facilitate the debate between public managers and universities on public policies for São Paulo's downtown and the possibilities of social participation and control programs, the NSP network is organizing the seminar "Public Policy for the Center: Current Context and Social Participation" at its facilities' (CASE3: Newsletter, March 10, 2008).

We can assert that this role of facilitator, providing the material conditions for meetings to occur, was often a key strategy of the NSP network to bring relevant social groups into contact – not only with their counterparts but also, for the first time, with the NSP network itself. It was clear that facilitating is a manoeuvre seeking to encourage other stakeholders to assume some kind of informal authority so to assume the role of conveners or referents in a space that is, nevertheless, within NSP territory. The articulation of power relations and the creation of material conditions were intertwined and difficult to separate.

The next two micro-practices – *deliberating* and *elaborating* – are interdependent (as one often precedes the other) but still distinct. Deliberating involves an organized effort requiring the filtering, processing, and compilation of specific pieces of information – suggestions,

proposals, and warnings – and their in-depth discussion with a view to making consensual decisions or recommendations. Once decisions, recommendations, or new knowledge have been achieved – deliberated – they are embodied in specific devices – tools and documents – through elaborating micro-practices. In short, NSP assembles and organizes information and people for deliberation, and then NSP and other engaged actors elaborate proposals and develop new devices, tools, documents, etc. Both micro-practices imply the collaboration of different players and, although this collaboration is orchestrated by NSP, the actors concerned by a specific issue define their roles themselves and share responsibility during the elaboration and construction of new resources. Elaborating micro-practices shapes the outcomes of deliberating micro-practices in a material form, such as documents, guides, web platforms, and brochures. Not all outcomes from *deliberating* micro-practices became codified – 'materialized' – but NSP has learned the power of such tools and devices when the next two micro-practices – *disclosing* and *proposing* – are put in place.

The role of power in organizing pathways: In *organizing*, some formal authority – exerted by the convener, NSP – is recognized, but it is exercised to delegate and create opportunities and spaces for the emergence of informal authorities across multiple interactions. What characterizes elaborating and deliberating is the dynamic emergence of provisional, multiple, informal authorities over time, depending on the meeting or the event, where the abundant resources provided by NSP are transformed, reshaped, and co-created. NSP acts as a broker and has very little, if any, control over the processes of co-creation. The outcomes are often unexpected as NSP does not know what kind of transformation people will effect during their deliberating and elaborating activities.

Acting pathway. After *organizing* takes place, we have a final pathway – *acting* – that integrates three types of micro-practice: *disclosing*, *proposing*, and *partnering*.

Disclosing micro-practices involve NSP's revealing elaborated information (about quality of life, political events, etc.) to different actors (e.g., citizens), thereby putting into action the artifacts produced by elaborating micro-practices with one general but well-defined goal: to empower civil society. They differ from bombarding and targeting micro-practices in the nature and form of the information and knowledge produced. Bombarding and targeting occur in earlier phases of the collaboration process. In fact, we could say that they represent attempts to involve and attract, thus truly engaging actors in the collaboration, and that the information and knowledge involved are abundant and still in a more general form (they have not yet been processed and recreated by deliberating and elaborating micro-practices). Disclosing micro-practices are more purposive as they mobilize elaborated information, knowledge, and artifacts that have already been scrutinized, debated, and shaped in different settings and at different times. They are also highly strategic as they are mobilized at a specific time with targeted goals.

One exemplary illustration of deliberating, elaborating, and disclosing micro-practices working in sequence involved the definition of socio-environmental indicators, their production, and their publication on a web-based platform (the Citizen Observatory). From information received from a variety of stakeholders (citizens, civil society organizations, universities, etc.), over several months, different working groups discussed

what socio-environmental indicators would best represent the priorities of the various component organizations and population segments in terms of education, health, transportation, housing, etc. Although not without conflict, NSP developed tactics to facilitate the attainment of consensual sets of indicators for each area.

> 'These indicators will be analyzed and debated by various groups during the Forum to develop ways to meet the social, economic, political, environmental, and urban challenges' (CASE3: Newsletter, February 25, 2008).

Once these selection processes had achieved a certain level of consensus – even if only provisional – within each working group, NSP mobilized technicians to build the Citizen Observatory, a digital platform giving free access to those indicators to all citizens of São Paulo. Rather than hold on to this information to increase its legitimacy or negotiating power, NSP makes it accessible to the general public. In addition to publishing the indicators on the web-based platform, it also published a document containing all suggestions made during the discussions.

> 'For this publication (Proposals for São Paulo), NSP tried to preserve the originality of each suggestion as well as regional specificities. We have also kept the general formulations and the existence of differences, even contradictions, on some topics. [. . .] As a result, proposals coming from various sectors of society have been systematized and made available with transparency' (CASE3: Newsletter, July 23, 2008).

Proposing micro-practices relate to concerted actions directed at targeted groups or actors, primarily government officials and political candidates, regarding decision-making processes. Exercising its formal authority, NSP uses resources (mainly information) to achieve specific purposes. With these micro-practices, reaction is required and requested. For instance, in the following quote, we observe a *proposing* tactic when NSP publicly pressured candidates to address specific demands. The targeted candidates were invited to attend a meeting where they received not only a large number of proposals from civil society members but also a set of ten proposals, codified in a document, which NSP used as a negotiating tool throughout the election process. The candidates were pressured to explain their position on these proposals. Some weeks later, the two remaining candidates for the position of mayor signed the document.

> 'During an event sponsored by NSP on the morning of Monday, July 21, eight of the eleven candidates for mayor of São Paulo received more than 1,500 proposals to improve the quality of life in the city (.) About 700 people attended the ceremony at the SESC Theater (.) Candidates also received a document with ten proposals chosen by NSP to be used throughout the electoral process and during the tenure of elected candidates" (CASE5: Newsletter, July 23, 2008).

The connections between proposing and disclosing are clear. With proposing micro-practices, NSP controls resources that it uses to elicit responses from political and

economic actors; with disclosing micro-practices, NSP distributes resources (e.g., 'shaped' information) to the public and civil society actors. For example, in addition to the Citizen Observatory, NSP created publications using socio-environmental indicators of quality of life for residents of São Paulo, which were sent to targeted civil society associations to encourage and nurture their political action.

> 'The NSP launched a series of seven publications that present social, cultural, and economic indicators for the city grouped by region and by each of the thirty-one sub-districts' (CASE1: Newsletter, September 26 2008).

Community leaders began to use the information from the indicator publications to negotiate with the municipal government for improvements in their neighbourhoods. With disclosing micro-practices, the target audience receives the shaped artifacts, tools, and devices, and they decide whether or not to react and interact.

Finally, using partnering micro-practices and assuming the formal authority of the network, NSP builds or strengthens partnerships with one or more organizations (e.g., international organizations such as UNICEF or for-profit firms such as Natura), according to agenda-related goals.

> 'The partnership between PAVS (Project for Green and Healthy Environments) and NSP was created to distribute information about environmental indicators for the city to the general public' (CASE1; Newsletter, March 31, 2008).

The role of power in acting pathways: In this pathway, we note that the role of power as formal authority attains importance in proposing and partnering micro-practices. The resources shaped by elaborating and deliberating are used in political action but they are also shared, through *disclosing* micro-practices, to empower citizens and civil society organizations, thereby reinforcing mobilizing and organizing pathways.

Processual Model of Engagement

Figure 4 presents the resulting processual model of engagement, which consists of three pathways – mobilizing, organizing, and acting – and its varied and intricate sets of micro-practices implemented by complex collaborations, such as those involving civil society. The model shows how pathways can be understood as recurrent sequences of micro-practices, patterns that those studying collaborations have been looking for, patterns that – through their cumulative action – might lead to important achievements.

There is a logic of networking and interdependency behind this model. The sequences are iterative: some micro-practices may be mobilized simultaneously while some are dependent on others to be triggered. Bombarding and targeting could be mobilized at the same time (arrow a) and together they create a mobilizing pathway. While the formal authority of the convener makes it possible to share resources (possession view of power), those resources are not seen as rare but abundant; they are not to be controlled, but widely shared and recreated in practice (practice view). The concerted interaction

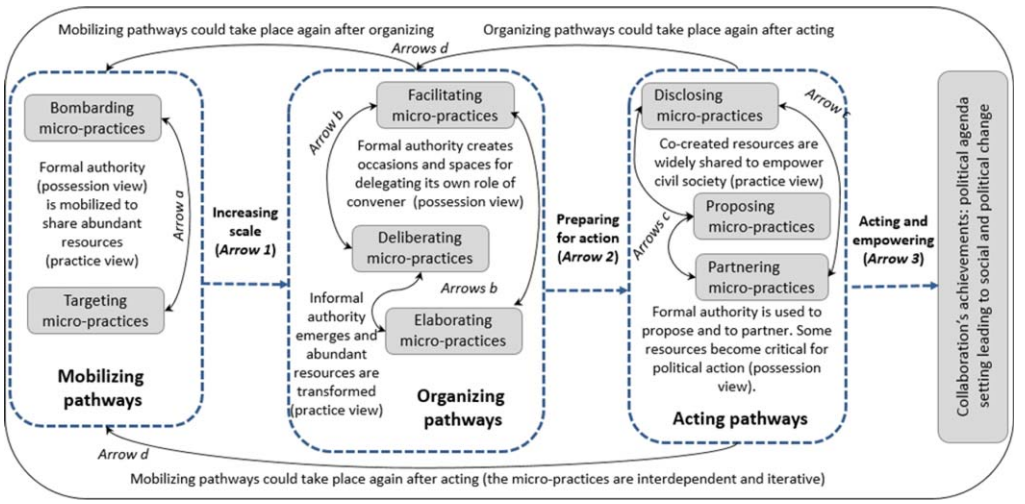

Figure 4. A processual model for micro-practices of engagement

between bombarding and targeting and the underlying interplay of possession and practice views of power *help the collaboration to gain scale* (arrow 1).

The strength of facilitating, elaborating, and deliberating is dependent on the existence of mobilizing pathways; otherwise, there is no critical mass to advance the collaboration. These three micro-practices are self-reinforcing (arrow b), although facilitating helps the others to develop more easily. With facilitating, the convener holds and uses formal authority to create opportunities and spaces to delegate its role as convener (possession view); such an emerging authority arises informally and provisionally, in the flow of the action, working to transform and revisit, sometimes in an unexpected form, the abundant resources mobilized in the previous phases (practice view). The cumulative effect of mobilizing and organizing pathways *prepares the collaboration for political action* (arrow 2).

Finally, disclosing, proposing and partnering are iterative (arrow c) and dependent on the existence of organizing pathways, placing refined and purposeful critical resources in the hands of citizens and coalitions previously mobilized and organized. Through their legitimate representatives, these citizens and coalitions mobilize the critical resources for partnering and proposing political action (possession view). At the same time, disclosing micro-practices share the co-created resources to continually empower civil society, not only through ad hoc political action but also in daily life, enacting a sense of citizenship (practice view). Once again, we recognize the cumulative effect of mobilizing, organizing, and acting as some collaborative achievements take the form of *political agenda setting and growth* (arrow 3). At any time, the collaboration can reinitiate mobilizing or organizing micro-practices (arrow d), reinforcing its iterative character. Table II summarizes the complementarity of possession and practice views.

DISCUSSION

In the following pages, we discuss our findings in three parts. First, we discuss what the investigation of NSP's multiple-collaboration platform adds to the extant literature on

Table II. The complementarity of possession and practice views

	Mobilizing (bombarding, targeting)	*Organizing (facilitating, deliberating, elaborating)*	*Acting (disclosing, partnering, proposing)*
Possession view	NSP holds and uses formal authority to share resources.	NSP holds and uses formal authority to create opportunities and spaces for delegating its role as convener.	Formal authority is mobilized by NSP to propose and partner. Some resources became critical for political action.
Practice view	Resources are not seen as rare but abundant; they are not to be controlled, but widely shared and recreated in practice.	Informal authority emerges in the flow of action; it is dispersed, provisional, multiple. Abundant resources are transformed and co-created, producing unexpected outcomes.	Co-created resources are widely shared to empower civil society.

social-driven collaboration. Second, we explain the originality of our processual model of engagement, which explains *how* large-scale social-driven collaborations can gain in scale and promote social and political change as well as the synergies we found between this body of literature and social movements. Third, we extend the existing debate on the role of power in collaboration, arguing for the complementarity of possession and practice views in helping to reveal new aspects of power that are absent in extant literature.

New Role of Convener in Large, Multiple, Hybrid Platforms

Literature concerned with social-driven collaboration highlights the ability of civil society to establish collaboration strategies with a variety of organizations (Hardy et al., 2003). The majority of investigated experiences are relatively limited in scope compared to the NSP network, however. In line with previous studies (Dorado, 2005; Gray 1985, 1989; Selsky and Parker, 2005; Waddock, 1989; Westley and Vredenburg, 1991), we note that the NSP platform serves as a bridge, allowing the formation of several collaborations uniting different sectors. Its credibility and legitimacy among multiple stakeholders, as well as its familiarity with local problems, allow NSP to negotiate with key stakeholders and provide access to key resources. However, instead of pooling and controlling scarce or critical resources (Dorado and Vaz, 2003; Montgomery et al., 2012), the micro-practices developed by NSP lead not only to the significant sharing of abundant resources with no attempt to control them but also, primarily, to *mobilizing* and empowering multiple stakeholders, thereby creating conditions for them to *organize* themselves around various social and environmental issues. During the organizing pathway, the co-creation of new resources (through deliberating and elaborating micro-practices)

and the continuous delegation of authority (through facilitating micro-practices) are two important aspects of a practice view of power.

The achievement of this coordinated decentralization of power apparently requires a new type of convener, one that purposively delegates its own role as convener to other organizations, thus giving up its control. This finding is an important contribution to collaboration literature as it shows that the emergence of complex forms of large-scale social-driven collaboration – platforms that are multiparty, hybrid, multiple – requires a new type of convener. Such a new type of convener differs from those reported in the extant literature (e.g., Dorado, 2005; Gray, 1989; Montgomery et al., 2012) in the way the convener manages resources and authority. The convener NSP basically consists of representatives of civil society that are able to skillfully manage the interplay between resources and authority, i.e., between sharing/co-creation of abundant resources and the coordinated decentralization/delegation of informal authority.

A Processual Model of Engagement: Synergies With Social Movements

A second important contribution of our study to the literature on social-driven collaboration lies in the process logic behind our theoretical model, which shows *how* complex platforms of multiple collaborations might increase in scale and create opportunities for achieving social and political change. Eight distinct micro-practices of engagement – bombarding, targeting, facilitating, deliberating, elaborating, disclosing, partnering and proposing – were found, and three pathways of engagement were identified – mobilizing, organizing, and acting. These patterns are interdependent, each creating or enabling conditions for the others. This means that organizing is more likely to occur after some mobilizing has been done. Acting is more likely to occur after organizing, which empowers NSP members and civil society. When the three pathways of engagement are present, they complementarily assist the collaboration to advance toward social or political change.

Our findings extend management literature by deepening the understanding of the diversity and complementarity of tactics and manoeuvres mobilized, providing a rich, detailed, and lively view of micro-practices and pathways within collaborations. Taking the three pathways together, our findings fill several gaps in the literature, particularly those related to complex collaborations occurring simultaneously, where the goals are multiple and constantly being redefined. In those platforms, achievements or changes result from an 'accumulation' of decisions and actions across a network of diverse organizations, groups, and citizens, and this accumulation is posited as a challenge to be grasped (Lukensmeyer and Brigham, 2005). The interdependence and intertwining of our eight micro-practices helps to understand how this 'accumulation' might be produced.

An unexpected and noteworthy contribution of our study is the identification of possible synergies between large-scale collaboration and social movement literatures, especially those concerned with coalitions (Diani, 2013; Van Dyke and McCommon, 2010) and with mesomobilizations (Gerhard and Rucht, 1992). Social movement theory is interested in mechanisms of collective mobilization with a view toward

challenging established institutions. We found that a number of social movement tactics identified in that literature reveal interesting similarities to the ones deployed by NSP, also suggesting at least two differences and unexplored cross-fertilization between the two fields.

First, while in coalitions 'two or more social movement' organizations work together on a 'common task' (Van Dyke and McCammon, 2010), the hybrid platform represented by NSP mobilizes strategies that promote collaboration among more heterogeneous actors, including social movements, organizations in non-profit and profit sectors, and a diversity of stakeholders. In addition, unlike coalitions focused on specific and temporary goals (Diani, 2013), NSP creates a space to develop joint actions ensuring the conjunction of many strategies to achieve a long-term societal goal: to improve quality of life for São Paulo's citizens. The identification of three pathways and the various micro-practices that compose them revealed that, in addition to the protest tactics widely employed by social movements (Soule, 2013; Taylor and Van Dyke, 2004), NSP also mobilizes propositional strategies, particularly in the acting pathway.

Second, the NSP platform resembles mesomobilization, which 'provide[s] the context – framing the issues, causes and solutions – members, leaders and communication networks' for micromobilization (Gerhard and Rucht, 1992, p. 557). The tactics deployed during mesomobilization are quite similar to our organizing micro-practices, although some important differences may be observed, primarily in deliberating and elaborating. The aim of NSP is not just to 'challenge established institutions,' as is often the case in social movements (Taylor and Van Dyke, 2004), but to foster new ideas and views, proposing alternative solutions for complex social problems. NSP not only provides spaces and opportunities where consensus might be built but also delegates its role as convener, generating opportunities for unexpected outcomes in terms of ideas and vision. A shared understanding of the world is therefore not 'suggested' by a common frame laid down by mesomobilization promoters or conveners (Benford and Snow, 2000).

Finally, in the social movement literature, 'framing' or boundary construction are cognitive processes referring to the signifying work – the construction of meaning by movement actors – which is central to mobilizing strategies of social movements (Benford and Snow, 2000; Diani, 2013; Taylor, 2013). What is distinctive here is that NSP ensures the transition to action by offering varied spaces and opportunities for debate before arriving at a consensus. Our results suggest that the micro-practices mobilized by NSP seek to preserve the diversity of views rather than to impose a common frame (Gerhard and Rucht, 1992).

In short, we believe that both literatures – large-scale social-driven collaboration and social movement – could benefit from each other. Management scholars studying collaboration would benefit from research on social movements and from our findings for two primary purposes: to access a detailed analysis of tactics of engagement to understand how a social movement organization can grow in scale and to understand change through challenge and collective mobilization processes (Hensmans, 2003). Social movement literature, in turn, could benefit from our results regarding empowerment strategies as those used by NSP involve the transformation of

information and expert knowledge through major co-creation activities where participants organize themselves in spaces provided by the convener. Our results show that each pathway builds on precedent and accumulated logic: 'helping to gain scale,' then 'preparing for action' and 'helping to act'. This logic may be integrated into framing and empowerment strategies identified by social movement theorists. In sum, one of the main contributions of our processual model of engagement is to show how large-scale collaborations can contribute to social movements, particularly by helping to refine political agendas for more purposive collective action.

Complementarity of Possession and Practice Views of Power in Collaborations

Finally, our examination of micro-practices of engagement enabled us to identify the dominance of one particular epistemology in the understanding of power in collaboration – the epistemology of possession. We inferred that that dominance – which explains the disproportionate presence of theoretical approaches such as institutional, resource-based, knowledge-based, and stakeholder theories behind cross- and multi-sector studies – is what retains researchers investigating large-scale social-driven collaboration from exploring more detailed and lively dynamic micro-practices. By combining possession and practice epistemologies, we extend existing debates on the role of two aspects of power in collaboration – resources and authority. A generative dance – using the images created by Cook and Brown (1999) – between possession and practice helps to understand new aspects of power, where both resources and authority are transformed in practice, in the flow of action, in an emergent and provisional way.

Extant literature tends to treat resources as being rare, critical, and scarce (Hardy and Phillips, 1998, Hood et al., 1993; Waddock and Post, 1995); control of resources is therefore crucial as it affects each party involved in a collaboration process (Gray, 1985). These studies emphasize control over limited resources. As our analysis progressed, we observed that information and knowledge are among the most important resources in collaborations where civil society plays a central role, and they are definitely not seen as scarce resources to be controlled. On the contrary, they are seen as abundant and requiring efficient sharing among the largest possible number of citizens to inform and empower them. A practice view helps us to understand that those abundant resources are not static and controlled by a convener, but rather are dynamic, provisional, and in constant transformation by multiple stakeholders, individual citizens, and civil society groups. Similarly, although formal authority is important for mobilization, a practice lens helps to identify a new type of convener that uses its formal authority to create spaces for the emergence of informal authority in a decentralized, provisional, and dynamic way that, again, might only be grasped in the flow of action (meetings, forums, debates, etc.).

The possession view helps explain how NSP holds and uses its formal authority to share and transform resources using mobilizing tactics and manoeuvres. The practice view helps explain how resources are not only 'held' but dynamically shared and transformed to become empowering tools and devices. Even more interesting insights

emerge from *organizing* tactics and manoeuvres, where we clearly observe the interplay between possession and practice views: NSP uses whatever formal authority it holds to create opportunities and spaces for delegating its role as convener. In those large platforms where numerous collaborations coexist, a practice lens therefore shows that informal authority usually prevails over formal and that such informal authority emerges dynamically from different meetings and events, in the flow of action, in a dispersed, provisional, and multiple manner. Analogously, we observe that the abundant resources shared by citizens – timely and relevant information and expert knowledge – are transformed through organizing pathways into the intense collective production of devices and artifacts, such intensive activities of co-creation being key to the creation of a network of empowered citizens and groups. An insight of note produced by a practice view is that it is precisely by giving up control that engagement and empowerment work.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has implications for research and practice. While more empirical investigation is needed, we have examined a complex form of social-driven collaboration, a platform wherein multiple and hybrid embedded collaborations co-exist. To make such a platform come alive, civil society plays a central role and represents a new type of convener. By asking what is different in the way this new type of convener acts, we open new avenues for understanding the role of power in collaboration. We thus extend existing debates on the role of two aspects of power – resources and authority – arguing that the dominant logic of possession that characterizes extant literature prevents an exploration of micro-practices – actionable activities, tactics, and manoeuvres – that would illuminate large-scale social-driven collaborative dynamics.

We argue for the complementarity of two views – possession and practice – as their simultaneous use can provide a more complete understanding of the role of power. The convener may share the conditions for widespread resource appropriation and recreation and delegate opportunities for informal authority to all who decide to embrace political action. The focus then changes from control of scarce resources to the distributed creation, co-creation, and shaping of abundant resources – primarily information – into purposeful, politically driven devices that are mobilized by a network of empowered participants. This holds several implications for those researching collaboration. Instead of looking at what critical resources are controlled and who is controlling them, or what formal authority or role the convener or other stakeholder is able to retain, scholars and practitioners should direct their attention to the interactions and micro-practices whereby power can dynamically be changed. In the case of social-driven collaborations, abundant resources that are co-produced, along with informal authority that emerges provisionally, help to empower civil society, even if they lie outside the boundaries of the collaborations.

Another important implication of our study involves the emergent processual model of engagement that we inductively built from a mass of data, revealing *how* large-scale social-driven collaborations might grow in scale and help promote social and political

change. Understanding the cumulative logic of micro-practices and pathways might improve the process by which members of civil society organize to create opportunities and spaces for dialogue – among themselves and with politicians/entrepreneurs – about relevant issues, including quality of life, sustainability, and social justice. At a time when deep controversies abound and complex problems require the collaboration of multiple actors, such improved understanding is becoming crucial to social and environmental advances.

Finally, our study is one of the first efforts to launch a dialogue between collaboration and social movement literatures: a greater understanding of how social-driven collaborations engage multiple stakeholders to increase in scale and achieve social and political change may be gained by linking the tactics of social movements to those of collaboration. Furthermore, since the dynamics of contention have changed and frontiers between social movements, civil societies, and enterprises have become blurred, as have their identities, tactics and interests (de Bakker et al., 2013), the processual and dynamic study of a new form of large-scale social-driven collaboration represents an important contribution to social movement theory.

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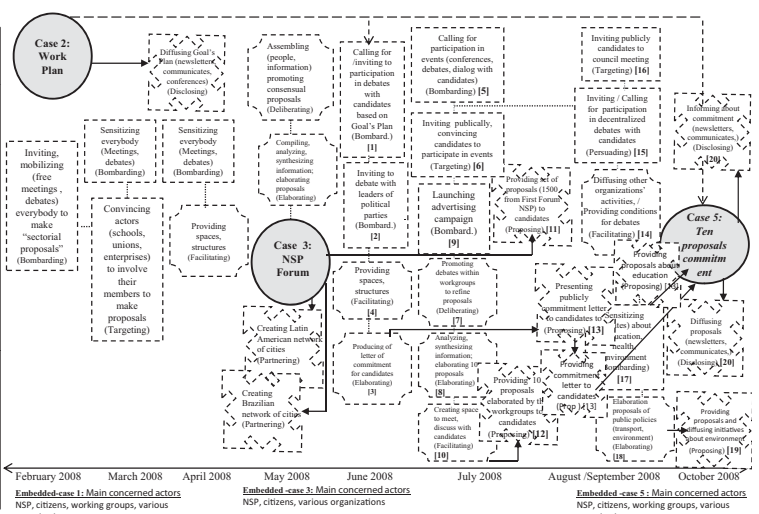
APPENDIX 1A: ILLUSTRATION OF VISUAL MAPPING

If we follow the micro-practices leading to **Embedded-case 5**, we can observe the complementarity among mobilizing pathway [micro-practices 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 15, 16, 17], organizing [micro-practices 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 14 and 18] and acting [micro-practices 11,12,13, 19 and 20]. They are not systematically sequential but interdependent.

Appendix-1b below is a zoom of Appendix 1a and it represents even in more detail the chronological reconstruction of micro-practices that led to the achievement of **Embedded-case 5**. This means that some micro-practices that appears in Appendix-1a are already a compilation of several more detailed activities, maneuvers and tactics.

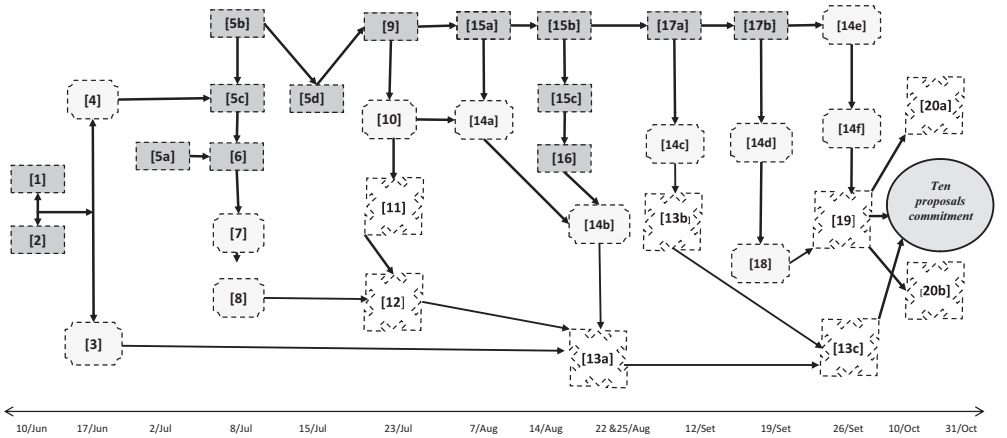
These illustrates how, in a iterative process, we have recognized micro-practices and pathways of engagement.



Legend Appendix 1A:

micro-practice of mobilizing; micro-practice of organizing; micro-practice of acting; achievement.

APPENDIX 1B: CHRONOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE EMBEDDED-CASE 5



Legend Appendix 1B:

micro-practice of mobilizing; micro-practice of organizing; micro-practice of acting; achievement.

(1) Calling for participation in debates about municipal elections (Bombarding)
(2) Inviting to debate with political parties's leaders (Bombarding) [***Abundant ressources spread]***
(3) Elaborating a commitment letter for candidates (Elaborating)
(4) Facilitating the implementation of debate: NSP performs a debate with the leaders of political parties on June 16 (Facilitating) [***Ressources shared; informal authority in action***]
(5a) Inviting to the presentation of a publication and to debate about Government's role (Bombarding) [***Ressources shared***]
(5b) Inviting citizens to dialogue with the candidates during the an event organized for July 21 (Bombarding)
(5c) Calling for participation: NSP organizes an event to deliver the 1500 proposals made during the First Forum NSP to the candidates on July 21 (Bombarding)
(5d) Calling for participation to citizens: NSP organizes an event to deliver the 1500 proposals made during the First Forum NSP to the candidates on July 21. All candidates confirmed their presence (Bombarding) [***Abundant resources shared***]
(6) Inviting publicly the candidates: NSP makes a public call for candidates to receive, on July 21, the 1500 proposals made during the Forum to the candidates (Targeting)
(7) Debating within NSP WG to elaborate proposals: All suggestions received since Feb.08 are discussed (Deliberating) [***Informal authority in action***]
(8) Elaborating 10 proposals for municipal management: Suggestions received since Feb. 08 are compiled, analyzed and synthesized in a consensual document (Elaborating)
(9) Launching of advertising campaign in mass media to sensitize citizens about their rights and the responsibilities (Bombarding) [***Resources shared***]
(10) Creating space to meet and to discuss with municipal candidates: On July 21, NSP performs an event to discuss with candidates and to submit proposals for municipal government (Facilitating) [***Resources shared***]
(11) Providing set of proposals: NSP delivers 1500 suggestions made during the Forum s (Proposing)***[Co-created resources shared]***
(12) Providing 10 proposals elaborated by the working groups to municipal candidates (Proposing) [***Co-created resources shared***]
(13a) Pressuring future authorities: NPS presents publicly a commitment letter (Proposing) [***Formal authority to propose***]
(13b) Providing proposals about education (Proposing) ***[Co-created resources shared]***
(13c) Providing commitment letter to candidates (Proposing) [***Formal authority to propose***]
(14a) Diffusing /supporting other organizations' activities: Invitation to an event with the candidates organized by the Law School of A.A. P. Foundation (Facilitating) [***Informal authority in action***]
(14b) Creating space to meet and to discuss with municipal candidates about education (Facilitating.))***[Co-created resources shared]***
(14c) Creating space to meet and to discuss with municipal candidates about education: On 9/9, NSP performed an event to discuss with candidates and to submit the proposals synthesized by the Education Working Group (Facilitating.) [***Resources shared***]
(14d) Creating space to meet and to discuss with candidates in decentralized debates(Facilitating.) [***Resources shared***]
(14e) Diffusing and endorsing other organizations activities (childhood education, transparency) (Facilitating.) [***Informal authority in action***]
(14f) Diffusion results of study of urban mobility (Facilitating.) [***Critical resources shared***]
(15a) Sensitizing about education: Inviting to participate in a meeting to discuss the Municipal Education Plan (Bombarding)
(15b) Calling for participation in decentralized debates with candidates (Bombarding)
(15c) Inviting citizens to an event: NSP organizes an event, on 25/8, to discuss with candidates for council member and to deliver a commitment letter (Bombarding)
(16) Inviting publicly the candidates for council member: NSP makes a public call for candidates to receive, on 25/8, a commitment letter (Targeting)
(17a) Inviting citizens to debate about health services with the candidates on September 15 (Bombarding)
(17b) Inviting citizens to debate about urban mobility with the candidates on September 22 (Bombarding)
(18) Elaboration proposals of public policies (transport, environment)(Elaborating) [***Informal authority in action***]
(19) Providing proposals and diffusing initiatives about environment (Proposing) ***[Co-created resources shared]***
(20a) Informing citizens about proposals for a transparent and ethical municipal management and the responsibility of the elected candidate with respect to the Goal's Plan (Disclosing) ***[Co-created resources shared]***
(20b) Publishing and informing citizens about 10 proposals for a transparent and ethical municipal management (Disclosing) ***[Co-created resources shared]***

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