ARTICLES

MANAGERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SOCIAL ENTERPRISES AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN BRAZIL

Percepções de gestores sobre parcerias entre negócios sociais e setor público no Brasil

Percepciones de gerentes sobre alianzas entre empresas sociales y el sector público en Brasil

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ABSTRACT

Social enterprises adopt hybrid organizational models and offer new possibilities for cross-sector collaboration between business and philanthropic sectors. However, there is a lack of research on partnerships involving social enterprises. This study examined the benefits and challenges of cross-sector partnerships between social enterprises and public sector organizations in Brazil. In-depth interviews with six managers of three partnerships revealed that social enterprises and public sector managers perceived "visibility" as a key benefit of the partnerships. However, both groups identified "budget constraints," "differences in work logic and pace," "lack of project continuity," and "complex approval processes" as significant challenges. These findings suggest that many of the benefits and challenges previously identified in partnerships between traditional sector organizations also apply to cross-sector partnerships involving social enterprises. The study contributes to understanding the potential of these cross-sector partnerships and highlights the need for further research in this area.

Keywords: Partnerships, cross-sector, public-private partnerships, social enterprises, public sector.

RESUMO

As empresas sociais, com seus modelos organizacionais híbridos, oferecem novas possibilidades para a colaboração entre setores, combinando características dos setores empresarial e filantrópico, no entanto há uma escassez de pesquisas sobre parcerias envolvendo empresas sociais. Este estudo examinou os benefícios e desafios das parcerias intersetoriais entre empresas sociais e organizações do setor público no Brasil. Entrevistas em profundidade com seis gerentes de três parcerias revelaram que tanto as empresas sociais quanto os gerentes do setor público perceberam a visibilidade como um benefício-chave das parcerias, porém ambos os grupos identificaram restrições orçamentárias, diferenças na lógica e no ritmo de trabalho, falta de continuidade do projeto e processos complexos de aprovação como desafios significativos. Esses resultados sugerem que muitos dos benefícios e desafios anteriormente identificados em parcerias entre organizações do setor tradicional também se aplicam às parcerias envolvendo empresas sociais. O estudo contribui para nossa compreensão do potencial das parcerias intersetoriais envolvendo empresas sociais e destaca a necessidade de mais pesquisas nessa área.

Palavras-chave: *Parcerias, intersetorial, parcerias público-privadas, empresas sociais, setor público.*

RESUMEN

Las empresas sociales, con sus modelos organizativos híbridos, ofrecen nuevas posibilidades para la colaboración intersectorial, entre los sectores empresarial y filantrópico. Sin embargo, existe una escasez de investigaciones sobre alianzas que involucren empresas sociales. Este estudio examinó los beneficios y desafíos de las alianzas intersectoriales entre empresas sociales y organizaciones del sector público en Brasil. Las entrevistas en profundidad con seis gerentes de tres alianzas revelaron que tanto las empresas sociales como los gerentes del sector público percibieron la visibilidad como un beneficio clave de las alianzas. Sin embargo, ambos grupos identificaron como desafíos significativos las limitaciones presupuestarias, las diferencias en la lógica y en el ritmo de trabajo, la falta de continuidad del proyecto y los procesos de aprobación complejos. Estos resultados sugieren que muchos de los beneficios y desafíos previamente identificados en las alianzas entre organizaciones sectoriales tradicionales también se aplican a las alianzas intersectoriales que involucran empresas sociales. El estudio contribuye a nuestra comprensión del potencial de las alianzas intersectoriales que involucran empresas sociales y destaca la necesidad de más investigaciones en esta área.

Palabras-clave: *alianzas, intersectorial, alianzas público-privadas, empresas sociales, sector público.*

INTRODUCTION

Public sector organizations have partnered with businesses and nonprofit organizations for decades (Defourny & Nyssens, 2008; Fischer, 2005; Galera & Borzaga, 2009; Austin, 2004; Wiggins et al., 2021). With the emergence of a new type of hybrid organization, called social enterprises (SEs), the public sector expanded its collaborative relations toward this new type of organization. SEs simultaneously present characteristics from the three main societal sectors (public sector, nonprofit organizations, and companies) (Barki et al., 2020; Battilana & Lee, 2014; Comini et al., 2013; Comini et al., 2021).

According to a systematic literature review carried out by Kosmynin (2022), studies about collaborations involving SEs started in 2005 but increased in 2017. These studies mainly focused on partnerships between SEs and companies, especially in Europe, Oceania, and North America. No studies about social enterprise collaboration in South America were found (Kosmynin, 2022).

Although there is a growing number of partnerships between social enterprises and other sectors, studies on how these hybrid organizations establish partnerships are still scarce, particularly in the public sector. The literature about partnerships involving SEs has investigated partnerships between SEs and corporations (Savarese et al., 2021; Weber et al., 2022), cross-sector collaboration in specific sectors such as construction (Barraket & Loosemore, 2018), work integration between SEs (Leca et al, 2018), the impact of alliances and bricolage (using everything available creatively to achieve goals) in SEs in China (Liu et al., 2021), and challenges of partnerships involving SEs in Baltic states (Urmanaviciene et al., 2021).

One important aspect of SEs is the context in which the organization is embedded. Country-level institutional factors and different sociocultural, economic, and regulatory characteristics typically influence the emergence rate of these organizations (Austin et al., 2006; Doherty et al., 2014; Pache & Santos, 2010) and their interaction with other actors, especially the public sector. Countries such as the USA, the UK, and those in the European Union have created policies and incentives for SEs, which can influence SE management practices and resource access (Doherty et al., 2014). Analyzing this aspect is essential to understand how SEs are perceived, stimulated, and relate to the public sector.

In Brazil, some government entities and SEs have started to form partnerships to generate mutual and collective benefits. Thus, an opportunity was identified to deepen the knowledge of how this type of collaboration is being developed (Aliança pelos Investimentos e Negócios de Impacto, 2017; Da Silva & Mendonça, 2019; Força Tarefa de Finanças Sociais, 2015). Studying these partnerships in Brazil can present interesting insights into benefits and challenges since the social enterprise sector in the country has developed mostly without legal or institutional recognition. Only recently, legal proposals to create specific categories for social enterprise have been discussed in the Brazilian Congress, but none have been approved so far (Souza, 2021). There is an opportunity to verify the benefits and challenges of establishing partnerships with those organizations in such a new and uncertain institutional context, attending the need to understand contextual influences in social enterprise intersectoral partnerships, such as his-

torical, cultural, and political aspects, especially in under-researched regions outside Europe and North America, as highlighted by Kosmynin (2022).

This paper addresses one key research question: Are the benefits and challenges presented in partnerships between the three main societal sectors also present in partnerships between SEs and public administration entities? This research question unfolds in other questions such as: which challenges and benefits are presented, and which are not? What circumstances enable or hinder them?

Our objective is to investigate which benefits and challenges, already mapped in previous studies on partnerships between the traditional sectors, were perceived in partnerships between SEs and public sector organizations. Thus, we developed in-depth interviews to analyze perceptions from managers of three partnerships between SEs and public sector entities in Brazil.

This article offers four contributions. Firstly, it expands the cross-sector partnerships literature (Selsky & Parker, 2005; 2010) by analyzing the extent to which characteristics of partnerships between traditional sectors could also describe partnerships in the new hybrid organizational context of SEs. Secondly, it presents empirical examples of how the public sector benefits from partnerships with hybrid organizations and managing the challenges encountered. Thirdly, it contributes to the literature on SEs by analyzing empirical examples in which this type of organization established partnerships to operationalize its actions (Ozdemir & Gupta, 2021). Fourthly, from a practical point of view, it provides valuable information to actors interested in forming future partnerships and improving management conditions in current collaborations.

The article presents a brief contextualization regarding cross-sector partnerships with public-sector organizations in Brazil. A literature review on hybridism and social enterprises is presented, followed by a review of cross-sector partnerships literature. Next, the methodology employed in this study, the selection criteria for the three partnerships studied, the data collection process, and the analysis methods are presented. Finally, it presents the benefits generated and the challenges faced by the organizations involved.

Cross-sector partnerships in the Brazilian context

Specifically in Brazil, intersectoral partnerships grew after the transition to democracy in the 1990s. At that moment, companies sought to expand their social performance with Corporate Social Responsibility, financing, and implementing social projects partnering with Civil Society Organizations. The Brazilian public sector was going through important transformations that also enabled collaboration with organizations from other sectors (Ckagnazaroff & Souza, 2010; Fischer, 2005).

The decentralization of state action, previously concentrated at the federal level, gave greater autonomy for policy implementation at the state and municipal levels. With more responsibilities, and limited expertise and budget, local public entities searched for new ways of partnering with different organizations to provide social services (Chagas, 2019; Farah, 2000; Googins & Rochlin, 2000).

Since 2006, there has been an increase in SEs in Brazil (Silva & Iizuka, 2018), leading to partnerships between them and the public sector. Only two publications were found regarding these relationships. The first is a guide from a private organization to encourage public municipalities to buy from SEs, citing eight examples of SEs that have sold products to the public sector (Aliança pelos Investimentos e Negócios de Impacto, 2017). The second presents a single case study about a partnership between a Brazilian SE and the São Paulo city government. Based on Austin's (2001) study on partnership continuum, Da Silva and Mendonça (2019) highlighted that this case had transactional partnership characteristics, i.e., short-term relationships focused on activities that enable partners to exchange resources and competence. They also found that while the partnership created mutual learning and incorporated innovations for the partners, they faced challenges regarding differences between the public sector and SE decision-making processes. However, their research was limited to one case study and did not focus on partnership benefits and challenges (Da Silva & Mendonça, 2019).

HYBRID ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

With the financial austerity that most governments have faced, the increasing pressure on companies to be more socially and environmentally responsible, and the challenges that nonprofit organizations have to raise money (McDermott et al., 2019), hybrid organizations are presented as a middle ground between the three traditional sectors and a potential public service provider. The hybrid realm is located among the three societal sectors (public sector, nonprofit organizations, and companies). Organizations within this realm can combine characteristics from two or three of these sectors (Karré, 2012).

Since SEs aim to achieve both social value creation and financial sustainability, they combine characteristics from the three societal sectors and do not fit into one specific category (Doherty et al., 2014). SEs are hybrid organizations, frequently seen as synonymous with hybrid organizations, as seen in the following quote "Hybrids exchange their impact on social issues for market resources" (Jäger & Schröer, 2014, p. 22).

The country-level institutional factors are important aspects to consider in the emergence of SEs. Different locations with different sociocultural, economic, regulatory, and institutional characteristics have different definitions and characteristics of SEs and the rate these organizations emerge (Austin et al., 2006; Doherty et al., 2014; Pache & Santos, 2010). Public policies regulating and incentivizing SEs were created in the USA, the UK, and the European Union. These institutional contexts can influence SE management practices and resource access by creating conflicting institutional demands (Doherty et al., 2014). Analyzing this aspect is essential to understand how SEs are perceived, stimulated, and relate to the public sector.

This dual mission presents tensions and complexity in partnerships with other organizations, especially from other sectors. This occurs because each organization pursues its own goals simultaneously with the partnership objectives. The more simultaneous goals, the more complex the partnership management can become (Doherty et al., 2014; Pache & Santos, 2010).

SEs hybrid aspect presents specificities to management. Tensions regarding performance occur since it is more difficult to measure social impact than financial results (organization--related tensions); at the same time, while social goals need long-term timelines to flourish, financial and business logic are operated in a shorter-term timeline. This can generate trade-offs between social and financial goals in the organization (Iizuka et al., 2015).

These tensions can translate into difficulties in accessing resources and finance. Finding funding is more difficult for SEs due to their dual goal to achieve social goals while aiming to keep finances sustainable. Also, they struggle to break even and pivot since they are tied to a social problem. These aspects limit access to financial institutions and instruments. As an alternative, SEs must diversify funding sources, relying on individual contributions, foundation grants, user fees, government payments, and partnerships with organizations from the same or other societal sectors (Austin et al., 2006).

Collaboration is a key aspect of SEs (Grassl, 2012). The need to keep a range of different supporters demands the ability to manage several stakeholder relationships and propose creative mechanisms to access resources from them (Doherty et al., 2014). Since SEs' mission is precisely to meet social goals, usually where opportunities and infrastructure do not reach, "[T]he strong relational ties with stakeholders are thus the conduit for resources and the foundation of cooperative working arrangements that seek to fill institutional voids" (Austin et al., 2006, p. 424).

CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

We adopt the Cross-Sector Social Partnerships (CSSPs) definition from Selsky and Parker (2005). CSSPs are formed to carry out projects between organizations from different sectors that come together with the explicit objective of acting on social issues (Selsky & Parker, 2005).

The literature on cross-sector partnerships has so far investigated the following aspects: (1) previous conditions to form partnerships, such as institutional environment and specific social and environmental problems that must be addressed; (2) the collaboration process itself and its drivers; (3) challenges, conflicts, and tensions in partnerships, including power imbalance; and (4) partnership outcomes and creation of public value (Bryson et al., 2015). This article focuses on topics 3 and 4 of Bryson et al.'s (2015) classification.

One of the cross-sector partnership approaches in the literature assumes that organizations from different sectors may have different views and approaches to the same issue (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010b; Selsky & Parker, 2010; Weber et al., 2022). It is precisely this difference that, while enriching, can also present greater challenges for its management (Weber et al., 2022).

Cross-sector partnership outcomes can be divided into plan outcomes, i.e., the final goals planned in the partnership (Clarke & MacDonald, 2016), generally for specific stakeholders or the community (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010b; Murphy et al., 2015; Selsky & Parker, 2010; Weber et al., 2022). They include process outcomes, results that emerge from the

partnerships, such as learning, and partner outcomes, which include results perceived by the partner to its own organization, like improved reputation and cost savings (Clarke & MacDonald, 2016).

Common benefits in cross-sector partnerships are access to resources, expertise, and know-how from the partner, increased community services level and quality, efficiency, and visibility (Fischer, 2005; Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Johnston & Finegood, 2015), and capacity for action that organizations alone could not conduct (Koschmann, Kuhn & Pfarrer, 2012).

These outcomes vary between organizations and between sectors. For governments, for example, one of the main benefits of cross-sector partnerships is to improve service quality (Gazley & Brudney, 2007), while for nonprofits, it is the possibility to fulfill their mission and increase the level and quality of community services (Gazley & Brudney, 2007).

On the other hand, common challenges faced by cross-sector partnerships are staff availability, lack of resources, time constraints (Gazley & Brudney, 2007), lack of mutual knowledge about expectations and desired results, evaluation, and monitoring metrics (Fischer, 2005; Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Johnston & Finegood, 2015).

Many of these challenges are related to elements characteristic of a particular sector, such as public sector bureaucracy. Others are related to the specific cultural patterns of each organization that can lead to cultural incompatibility (Austin, 2000; Fischer, 2005; Googins & Rochlin, 2000) and power asymmetry (Borges et al., 2020; Herlin, 2013).

Authors highlighted that there are key drivers to avoid these challenges and maximize the benefits, such as alignment of strategy, mission and values, establishing personal connections between partnering organizations, communication, and shared responsibilities. These are key aspects to consider when forming and managing a partnership (Austin, 2000). It is essential to ensure that the value generation is mutual and equitable (Austin, 2000; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010b; Murphy et al., 2015; Weber et al., 2022). Partners usually recalibrate the relationship during the partnership to manage their value creation (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010a; 2010b).

METHODOLOGY

In-depth interviews were conducted with managers from three partnerships. Initially, through a snowball sampling strategy (Naderifar et al., 2017), we mapped fifteen social enterprises (SEs) working in partnership with public agencies. Three of these partnerships were selected based on criteria of relevance, formalization, level of public administration involved in the partnership (federal, state, or municipal), and availability to participate in the research.

We interviewed the main manager from the SEs and their counterpart in the public entity (PE) to evaluate their perceptions. The criterion for choosing these managers as research subjects was the strategic role they played in the partnership, being responsible for the initial negotiations that culminated in the formalization of the cooperation agreement, in addition to concentrating most of the communication between their entities and having the autonomy to

make the necessary decisions to advance work processes. The interviews were held both in-person and online through Skype. All interviews were transcribed.

During the interviews, managers were asked to point out the benefits and challenges they encountered in the partnership according to a list identified in the available literature on intersectoral partnerships consulted for the development of the theoretical framework (Austin, 2000, 2001; Fischer, 2005; Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Selsky & Parker, 2005, 2010).

In the tabulation of these data, weight 1 was attributed to the chosen options, and their sum allowed the answers to be grouped into 5 categories: Unanimity – items that all respondents chose; SE-only – itemsthat all the SE managers chose; PE-only – items that all the managers from the PE chose; Diverse – for situations in which there was at least 1 vote from the respondents, but no unanimity; and None – items that none of the interviewees chose. The answers were tabulated in Figures 1, 2, and 3, where a black circle represents an option selected by the respondent, a blank circle represents an unselected option, and traces represent options that were not present in the questionnaire for that sector. In this article, the "Unanimity," "SE-only," "PE-only," and the "None" categories were analyzed, as they offer more relevant data and allow to formulate comparisons.

The 'respondents' choices were analyzed according to Eisenhardt (1989) and Miles et al. (2014). They were submitted to an iterative comparison of within-partnership and cross-partnership. The within-partnership analysis sought elements in the interviews that would justify and contextualize their choice. Cross-partnership was then compared, looking for common elements among the benefits and the challenges listed and the justifications attributed to them, incorporating elements from the Brazilian context. Finally, these same benefits and challenges listed were compared with the results of previous studies to identify similarities and differences in the responses.

The identities of the interviewees and SEs were not disclosed to maintain anonymity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three Brazilian partnerships between SEs and the public sector were analyzed during this research. Partnership A operated in the education sector and was funded by third-party organizations. Fundraising activities were divided between the public entity and the SE. Partnership B belonged to the food security sector, was financed by the SE, and did not receive public funding. Partnership C acted in the healthcare sector and was financed by a partner organization that connected the two organizations, intermediated the contract, and monitored the project design and implementation.

Challenges

Analyzing the 56 items in the challenges list, we found that four of them were unanimously selected by all respondents, five items were unanimously selected by public managers, and eight of them were not selected by any of the participants.

Figure 1. Compilation of "Challenges" responses in the "Unanimous," "SE only," and "PE only" categories

DESCRIPTION	PE			SE		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
Budget constraints	●	●	●	●	●	●
Differences in work logic and pace	●	●	●	●	●	●
Lack of project continuity	●	●	●	●	●	●
Need for the project to go through several people before being approved	●	●	●	●	●	●
Difficulty in balancing revenue and social performance	●	●	●	●	○	●
Difficulty in maintaining a lasting relationship	●	●	●	○	●	○
Lack of staff or time to manage the collaboration	●	●	●	●	●	○
Power imbalance	●	●	●	●	○	○
Time and resources spent in supporting activities	●	●	●	○	○	○

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As seen in Figure 1, the "Need for the project to go through several people before being approved" occurs due to the working logic of bureaucratic organizations. Relationships within these organizations are hierarchical, and the decision-making processes depend on several instances, as is the case with the Brazilian public sector.

> We must go through everyone, everyone has to know what's going on. Now that way, people don't interfere. We say that it is for the maintenance of power. So, I have nothing to do with this project, I have nothing to do with it, but because I hold this position of power, it must go through me, understand? Kind of marking territory (SE Manager).

Another difficulty found in negotiating the partnership lies in the electoral calendar's influence over the decision-making process. Proposals presented on dates close to the elections face greater challenges in being approved, as a possible change in the government seats can jeopardize or impede the continuity of activities. These challenges are reflected in the "Lack of project continuity," which was identified by Fischer (2005) and Lewis (2001), and "Difficulty in maintaining a lasting relationship," in line with Nelson and Zadek (2002). These constant changes generate insecurity and instability because when facing new staff from the public entity, SE managers need to redo the pitching process, realign the partnership's objectives and actions to adapt them to the new partner's priorities and work methods and, mainly, to re-establish trust – an essential component to the success of collaborations between organizations (Austin, 2000; Fischer, 2005; Selsky & Parker, 2005).

So every time there is a change in the secretary [public agency], we have to start the program from scratch; we need to present the entire program again even if I'm already implementing it. There is a delay because everyone needs to sit down and negotiate again, then the guy who takes over doesn't always see the same relevance as the guy who left (SE Manager).

The "Differences in work logic and pace," mentioned in previous studies by Fischer (2005), Leber and Branzei (2010b), and Lewis (2001), happen because while SEs are private organizations with flexible business models, lean staff, and more restricted financial resources, public sector entities have pre-determined hierarchies, processes, and routines with less room for innovation. These differences in organizational characteristics generate delays in decision-making processes and the execution of partnership activities. On the other hand, through SEs, it is possible to streamline innovation and mobilize various external resources.

The "Budget constraints" reflect the difficulty of partnerships to obtain financing within the public sphere. Since relations with SEs were new to these municipalities, it was not yet clear which contracting instruments to use, and thus ensure that the resources for the partnership would be provided for in the budget.

When we arrived at city hall, the mayor was delighted with the idea, said he wanted it right away, etc. But that it remained in that voluntary work. 'No, we promote you and everything else, the city hall helps with whatever is necessary, but we are not able to buy the service.' Then he gave me millions of reasons, budget data, and everything else, and because we were a company, and the city hall cannot hire a company without going through a bidding process, otherwise, it would be an illegal process and everything else (SE Manager).

In the three partnerships, partnership operationalization was only possible through external partners or entrepreneurs' resources. This reflects on the "Difficulty in balancing revenue and social performance," pointed out by Da Silva and Mendonça (2019) in their studies. The only respondent who did not indicate this difficulty was from the partnership that received funding from a third partner organization (Partnership C).

Searching for sponsors, negotiation, relationships, accountability, and possible counter commitments in exchange for funding demands more work time, skills, and staff. Furthermore, the inclusion of a third party in the partnership can add other demands and generate conflicts in organizational cultures and interests in a relationship that is already complex (Austin et al., 2006).

[...] We wanted to partner with a paint company to revitalize the school. So we had to ask City Hall and they came back with some demands, "oh, all the walls must be turquoise green, it can't be multicolored." […] Then we went back to the company, talked to them, they brought up […] some other demands, we took them to City Hall, City Hall took them internally for approval, and then they came back with an answer. These slow decision processes took away our autonomy of being able to make faster and more agile decisions, you know? (SE Manager)

A point of difficulty found in the research was the item "Power imbalance." This imbalance can be due to the influence that the organization exerts on other organizations and on the

media and the volume of financial and non-financial resources that the organization has (Fischer, 2005). While respondents from the public sector noticed this imbalance in the relationships, those from the SEs were unaware of its occurrence. This may signify that municipal management officials share a vision of superiority, ensuring the exercise of power over their partners.

> So, we set a limit for how far the [partner] can go, how far the [partner] can intervene in the project. Which can be a problem. One of the challenges faced by a public entity such as City Hall is the arrogant way in which it places itself in the project. (PE Manager).

Both the items "Time and resources spent in supporting activities" and "Lack of staff or time to manage the collaboration" were pointed out by Gazley and Brudney (2007) as challenges in partnerships. While the public sector perceives the item "Time and resources spent in supporting activities" as a difficulty, SEs do not. One of the factors that justify this point may be that social enterprises attribute more value to partnerships and, therefore, have greater flexibility to allocate staff and resources in their activities, while the public sector does not perceive as much value in this specific type of partnership to justify the increased allocation of staff and resources.

> [...] my daily life is still there, you know? My administrative routine is still there. I'll keep doing it every day and the project is just an extra activity, it's the same for the partner organization. They have their own administrative daily routine and the project is a plus and it ends up diverging. So when we have to deal with the project, I've already done something, they've done something, and some rework is going to be required there, there'll be some time, some energy, wasted there. (PE Manager)

Although the respondents pointed out several challenges found in previous surveys, others, on the contrary, were not selected by any of them (Category 'None').

The item "Disrespect for cultural diversity" was originally present in studies on organizations from different countries and pointed to challenges regarding cultural shock (Lewis, 2001). In the partnerships studied here, this difficulty was not pointed out. This may point to cultural and ethnic homogeneity among individuals working in the partnership and/or greater tolerance to cultural differences on the part of the interviewees. However, it does not mean that partnership relations between these two sectors are free from challenges regarding cultural diversity. In particular, in cases involving people of different classes, races, religions, or origins.

The fact that the items "Lack of knowledge on the part of the public sector about the products and functioning of the social enterprises" and "Partnership overshadows the organization's mission" were not chosen is related to the mediation of an intermediary organization (partnerships A and C) or a previous relationship with different partner organizations (partnership B).

Finally, the fact that managers did not point out that "Relationship with the community is affected" is justified by the fact that the SEs studied here are companies that do not have strong ties to specific communities, as cooperatives do. Furthermore, this may indicate that the organizations already had or acquired legitimacy to act within the community and that the partnerships, although still in progress, were generating value for the residents.

Benefits

Of the 36 benefits listed, only one was unanimously chosen by the respondents, eight of them were selected by all PE managers, only one by all SEs respondents, and only one item was not chosen by any respondent, shown in Figure 2. This result shows that the benefits generated by cross-sector partnerships found in the literature were also identified by the respondents, which means that they can be extended to the context of SEs in partnership with public entities in Brazil.

Figure 2. Compilation of "Benefits" responses in the "Unanimous," "PE only," "SE-only," and "None" categories

DESCRIPTION	PE			SE		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
Visibility	●	●	●	●	●	●
Establishment of deeper bonds with the community	●	●	●	●	●	○
Gain in resources	●	●	●	○	○	○
Improvement of resources usage	●	●	●	○	●	○
Increase of serviced public	●	●	●	○	●	●
More cost-effective	●	●	●	●	○	●
Partner brought know-how that the organization did not have	●	●	●	○	○	●
Promotion of shared goals	●	●	●	○	●	○
Gain professional experience	●	○	●	●	●	●
Social engagement	●	●	●	○	●	○
Reduction in the need to compete for resources	○	○	○	○	○	○

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As Figure 2 shows, the only benefit unanimously chosen by all respondents was "Visibility," identified in studies by Austin (2000) and Fischer (2005). However, despite the item's unanimity, its effects are perceived differently in the two organization types. For public administration, the benefit is understood in the context of leadership succession based on elections. To guarantee re-election or continuity of allies in power, it is necessary to show contributions and concern for the community and liaise with other spheres, such as state, federal, and international entities, to obtain resources. In this regard, visibility is essential.

As such, partnership projects with organizations such as social enterprises are exposed in media vehicles without being associated with electoral advertising. The benefit is thus used to link the mandate image to engagement with social proposals, maintaining a positive image with the population.

> [...] visibility too, because [...] when a newspaper is invited by City Hall it looks a lot like electoral propaganda. A startup invitation already makes it look more relevant (SE Manager)

For SEs, private organizations whose funding comes from sales, visibility has shorter-term effects, and its benefits are reflected in a sales increase, ensuring the company's perpetuity and enabling it to expand its operations. By working in collaboration with the public sector, SEs can gain legitimacy.

> [Having] the City Hall's endorsement [...] allowed me to gain [a contract] with [two other City Halls]. Having the endorsement of a City Hall can help me at a state level or a federal level, you know? (SE Manager)

The literature on cross-sector partnerships also highlighted that these arrangements enable leveraging the resources used for their performance (Austin, 2000; Fischer, 2005; Googins & Rochlin, 2000). This point may be linked to the fact that the public sector already has material, human, and infrastructure resources, such as space and equipment, staff, and media outlets, to which SEs can add their innovative methodologies and technologies and, as seen in two of the studied partnerships, expand both the scope of the public served and the reach of the actions carried out. Developing the necessary know-how and having access to resources independently would demand time, knowledge, staff, and specialized resources, all of which become readily accessible through partnerships.

The "Establishment of deeper bonds with the community" corroborates Austin's (2001) and Gazley and Brudney's (2007) findings. In this case, it is related to the fact that the implementation process can engage and connect professionals who work directly with the community and citizens benefiting from the new service offered.

As already pointed out in Austin (2001) and Googins and Rochlin (2000), respondents from SEs unanimously indicated the item "Gain in professional experience" in their partnerships. Because when working with the public sector, they are faced with large projects characterized by organizational complexity and the breadth of the service scale, allowing them to test technologies, products, and methodologies.

Only one benefit was not chosen by any of the respondents: "Reduction in need to compete for resources," highlighted by Gazley and Brudney (2007). This is probably because the competition for clients, partners, and financing for SEs remains, while in the public sector, the dependence on public funding persists, which is disputed by different agendas and political priorities.

Some benefits mapped in the literature on partnerships applied only to one sector or another, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Compilation of "Benefits" responses in the "SE only," "PE only," and "None" categories.

DESCRIPTION	PE			SE		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
Greater action transparency	◯	◯	◯	▬	▬	▬
Access to new markets	▬	▬	▬	●	●	●
Access to unique data that can help define market trends	▬	▬	▬	◯	◯	◯

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As shown in Figure 3, the benefit item "Greater action transparency" provided by the partnership, found in the work of Gazley and Brudney (2007), was not chosen by any of the respondents. This does not necessarily mean that the actions of the organizations involved were not transparent, but rather that this characteristic was not highlighted because of the articulation between them. In the partnerships studied, the absence of public funding did not determine that organizations submit their accountability to the inspection bodies of the public administration. Consequently, these enterprises can voluntarily publish their financial and accounting data or limit their access only to the respective financiers, investors, and donors while still being considered transparent.

One item was unanimously chosen by SEs, "Access to new markets," which was identified by Austin (2000, 2001), Gazley and Brudney (2007), and Googins and Rochlin (2000). Since these were the first experiences in this type of partnership for the businesses involved, it becomes clear why this item was highlighted by the respondents, as they expected to have access to other public entities and, as such, multiply the opportunities for joint work, as long as the partners tacitly recognized the results obtained and the good performance of the projects.

Googins and Rochlin (2000), who researched partnerships between large companies and CSOs, highlight that these collaborations added "Access to unique data that can help define market trends," which was included in the questionnaire addressed to SEs managers but were not chosen by any of the respondents. As such, it can be deduced that, although this is not the main objective of SEs when seeking to establish partnerships with the public sector, they can expand their knowledge of how the sector works, test their potential as buyers of their products and services, and identify more accurately and with clarity the needs of the community served.

As in the Challenges, the analysis of the Benefits perceived by the respondents shows us that even in a different context of partnerships between SEs and PEs in Brazil, many of the items found in the literature are present. This allows the analytical frameworks to be extended to new locations and new organizational types, representing their external reproducibility and validity.

CONCLUSION

This article analyzed the benefits and challenges perceived by managers of three partnerships between SEs and public entities in Brazil.

The partnerships studied pointed to the fact that partnerships between these two organizational types encounter already-known challenges mapped in studies of other partnership types and other countries. Issues such as project duration, contracting difficulties, renegotiation after changes in public management, budget restrictions, bureaucratic obstacles that demand articulation with other organizations, creativity, and organization adaptation must be addressed to make the projects viable. The three partnerships studied involved organizations that had never had this type of partnership before and can serve as a source of learning, tests, and endorsement for future work with organizations in these sectors. The know-how they gained can also be expanded, adapted, and replicated in other locations.

Nonetheless, the partnerships studied managed to overcome a significant number of challenges mapped in the literature. Challenges related to disrespect, cultural conflicts, and dependency were not perceived in these relationships. The causes for this are varied, from managers' previous personal background to partnerships with other organizations and an accumulation of knowledge and experience with partnerships.

As for the benefits, managers from both sectors highlighted "Visibility" as a benefit derived from the partnership between their organizations since this item has the potential to bring more partners, resources, and sales to the business while generating good visibility for the elected members of the public entities in electoral disputes. The expansion of the public served and the increased use of resources were also pointed out by the respondents as benefits, reinforcing the analytical frameworks from the literature. One aspect that was surprising in the analysis was the creativity that the partnerships had to overcome financial, institutional, and legal constraints, especially using the figure of an intermediary that could endorse some of the partnerships and finance them.

This study has limitations, as it is based on the perceptions of managers within partnerships. In addition, it is restricted to three partnerships where the public sector partner was only at the municipal level. Since the partnerships were still in progress at the time of the research, we could not analyze their results. A study with more partnerships involving different levels of public administration and focusing on concluded partnerships may provide new insights into the phenomenon. Furthermore, the research only analyzed the benefits and challenges already mapped in the literature. New studies can verify whether partnerships present new benefits and challenges that have not yet been mapped in the literature.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Ana Luiza: Project Management, Formal Analysis, Conceptualization, Data Curation, Writing –First Drafting, Writing – Revision and Editing, Research, Methodology, Visualization.

Rosa Maria Fischer: Writing – Revision and Editing, Supervision.