

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS?

O QUE SABEMOS SOBRE OS RELACIONAMENTOS COLABORATIVOS DAS ORGANIZAÇÕES SEM FINS LUCRATIVOS?

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Resumo

Este artigo analisa a literatura científica sobre relações de colaboração, através de uma análise bibliométrica, com uma incidência particular em organizações sem fins lucrativos (NPOs). O desenvolvimento de parcerias bem-sucedidas entre o setor comercial e as organizações sem fins lucrativos é vital para a organização e para a empresa. No entanto, esse sucesso depende do potencial de ambas as partes compartilharem valores e objetivos semelhantes e / ou congruentes, contribuindo para a confiança e o comprometimento. A literatura ainda é incipiente nas relações de colaboração entre organizações sem fins lucrativos e organizações empresariais, portanto esse tópico apresenta importantes oportunidades de pesquisa. O objetivo deste artigo é promover uma análise bibliométrica sobre este tópico, a fim de descrever o estado da arte nas relações de colaboração em que uma das partes é uma NPO. Os resultados mostram que as relações entre organizações sem fins lucrativos e, principalmente, parcerias intersetoriais se tornaram uma tendência nos últimos anos e que as colaborações entre setores foram amplamente adotadas como mecanismo de trabalho.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: colaboração, parceria, aliança, organização sem fins lucrativos, terceiro setor

Abstract

This paper analyses the literature on collaborative relationships, through a bibliometric analysis, with a particular incidence on non-profit organizations (NPOs). The development of successful partnerships between the business sector and NPOs is vital for both the organization and the company. However, this success depends on the potential of both parties to share similar and / or congruent values and goals, contributing to trust and commitment. The literature still incipient on collaborative relationships between NPOs and business organizations, so this topic presents important research opportunities. The objective of this paper is to promote a bibliometric analysis on this topic, in order to describe the state of the art on collaborative relationships in which one of the parts is a NPO. The results show that relations between NPOs and especially intersectoral partnerships have become

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a trend in recent years and that collaborations between sectors have been widely adopted as a working mechanism.

KEYWORDS: collaboration, partnership, alliance, non-profit, third sector

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last 25 years, collaborative relationships have become increasingly prominent in the various sectors of all economies, resulting in an evolutionary change in the management of institutions since the 1980s. Although these relationships have operated collaboratively for centuries, literature has only recently looked at its study.

One type of collaborative engagement is partnership between business, government, and civil society - the three major sectors. In these sectoral partnerships, socially oriented, NPOs address a number of varied challenges, such as economic development, education, health care, poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012).

A common argument is that these relationships between governments, firms and NPOs are blurring the boundaries between sectors, as the boundaries cannot be clearly drawn, as each is interconnected with others (Prakash, 2011). Cross-sectoral overlap can occur when an organization in a sector adopts or captures a role or function traditionally associated with another sector, such as when governments outsource social welfare functions to NPOs or companies (Selsky & Parker, 2005).

The type of cross-sectional social partnership (Selsky & Parker, 2005) has become widely adopted by all sectors as working mechanisms to address complex social issues that extend beyond organizational boundaries (Casais & Santos, 2019; Moshtari, 2016; Seitanidi, 2008).

The growth in collaborative relationships between NPOs and other sectors has been increasing as mentioned previously, some of the reasons for this may be due to the following factors: privatization and loss of public confidence have that have weakened governments at all levels, forcing them to engage more with companies and with civil society or NPOs to provide public goods and services. At the same time, companies need to respond to the needs of their customers that require more citizenship behaviours (Chang, Seetoo, Yu, & Cheng, 2016; Selsky & Parker, 2005).

This paper aims to analyse collaborative relationships with a particular focus on non-profit organizations. These collaborations have reached dimensions of great relevance for NPOs as they are essential to ensure the achievement of the mission and its long-term survival. There is a widespread interest in recent years, since it has been a subject studied and debated in the literature, at the same time publications have increased exponentially in the last years, although few analyse this paradigm with the business sector. Therefore, this bibliometric analysis focuses, essentially, on the collaborative relationships where, at least, one of the parts is a NPO.

2. COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

The theoretical discussion that follows is about conceptual aspects and main characteristics of collaborations. In the following section, concepts are presented and collaborative relationships are framed in the context of NPOs and private companies.

First of all, it will be important to point out that the literature studied uses a variety of terms to describe "joint work between organizations", from collaborations, partnerships, cooperation and strategic alliances (Wymer & Samu, 2008). Generally, there is no clear distinction between these concepts in the literature, but it can be suggested that they differ in terms of the degree of cooperation (Polonsky, Lefroy, Garma, & Chia, 2011). According to Seitanidi, Koufopoulos, & Palmer (2010), we can distinguish these concepts as follows: collaboration occurs in processes

that the parties work together to achieve a common goal; in the case of partnerships, which are also a process of working together, we must include risk and shared reward.

Some authors (Dickinson & Barker, 2007; Polonsky et al., 2011) argue that partnerships between organizations in different sectors of the economy are often referred as intersectoral partnerships, being that some authors argue that these are clearly different from partnerships that occur within the same sector. However, other authors (Rondinelli & London, 2003) claim that such cross-sectoral partnerships are no different from commercially-based partnerships. In both cases, partners work collaboratively to achieve a set of goals, and provide valuable organizational resources.

There are four types of partnerships between sectors: 1 - Partnerships between governmental and business organizations; 2- NPOs and government; 3 - NPOs and business; 4- Tripartite partnerships, i.e. the 3 sectors work collaboratively on a social issue (Seitanidi, Koufopoulos, & Palmer, 2011).

Deepening the collaborative relationships between businesses and NPOs, they can experience different degrees of development depending on the extent to which relational standards guide interaction between partners. Consequently, these alliances can be distinguished in terms of commitment and value creation (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012): philanthropic (a charitable transfer of monetary or in-kind resources from a corporate donor to a beneficiary NPO); transactional (partners exchange more valuable resources through particular activities, e.g. sponsorships, cause-related marketing, or personnel engagements); integrative (partners' missions, strategies, values, personnel, and activities experience organizational integration, resulting in co-creation of value); and transformational partnerships (partners involve in joint problem solving, decision making, management, learning, and conjoined benefits creation).

Developing cooperative relationships with stakeholders, including alliances with other organizations, is critical to NPOs, to ensure long-term mission achievement and survival (Álvarez-gonzález, García-rodríguez, Rey-garcía, & Sanzo-perez, 2017; Wellens & Jegers, 2014), and there is a significant amount of literature that studies alliances involving non-profit organizations (Dickinson & Barker, 2007; Polonsky et al., 2011; Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007).

Developing successful partnerships between the business sector and NPOs is vital to both NPO and businesses (Ferreira, Carvalho, & Teixeira, 2017) being that the proliferation of NPOs, combined with the difficulties of the economy, is forcing NPOs not only to compete for traditional sources but also to develop new resources to ensure long-term survival and scale up their operations in order to face the increasing social demand (Álvarez-gonzález et al., 2017; Laurett & Ferreira, 2018).

In the business perspective, interest increased considering the growing importance of the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Dupire & M'Zali, 2018; Halme & Laurila, 2009). The central principle of CSR is to implicitly or explicitly achieve organizational impacts that can lead to social change through policies and programs (Cobourn & Frawley, 2017; Licandro, Sabath, & Yapor, 2011; Scandeliuss & Cohen, 2016).

Despite the growth in the number of collaborative relationships, there are several factors that make the development and sustainability of collaborations between sectors a very complex process (Anheier, Krlev, & Mildemberger, 2019; Jang, Feiock, & Saitgalina, 2016). These factors includes organizational diversity, cultures and mentalities associated with each social sector (Dahan, Doh, Oetzel, & Yaziji, 2010). Therefore, despite their widely accepted potential, a large proportion of these partnerships are unsuccessful. A trend that also occurs in alliances between companies of the same sector (Barroso-Méndez, Galera-Casquet, Seitanidi, & Valero-Amaro, 2016).

3. METHODOLOGY

The method used in this paper is a bibliometric analysis, a technique that evaluates relevant publications on a topic. Some authors (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015) mention that bibliometric analysis can be understood as a method that aggregates laws and statistical principles whose fo-

cus is mapping scientific productivity. Based on the bibliometric method, some steps were established. Firstly, we chose the Web of Science database, secondly, we defined the selection of papers, using the following combinations of keywords: TS= (collaboration? SAME no*profit); TS= (partnership? SAME no*profit); TS= (alliance? SAME no*profit); TS= (c*operation AND no*profit), in order to cover all papers that relates the same concepts of collaboration or similar use in the literature (alliances, cooperation, partnership) and non-profit organizations. No temporal filters, language filters or area filters were used. We obtained a total of 511 articles, covering the period from 1999 to 2018.

Using the function of co-occurrences of terms, which searches both in the title and in the summary of papers, the term relationship diagram, shown below, was constructed, and we can identify three different clusters. The formation of these clusters occurred automatically, but after the minimum number of occurrences of the terms was selected (20 minimum occurrences), in order to simplify the understanding of the results. It should be noted that a file provided by the software was used where we eliminated some words that commonly appear in papers, and has no direct connection with the topic. The networks were highlighted by different colours, being chosen randomly by the software and do not maintain any relation of importance, used only for clusters signalling.

4. BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF COLLABORATIONS WITH NPOS

To understand the relationship between the mentioned concepts, this paper is based on bibliometric analysis techniques, using the VosViewer tool. The procedure consisted in the analysis of papers referring to collaborations in NPOs.

From the analysis of co-occurrences of terms, we can perceive three clusters, which are analysed below. The red cluster includes terms that allow us to characterize the collaborative relationship in terms of its intrinsic characteristics. In the green cluster there is a predominance of organizational characteristics and organizational aspects. The blue cluster relates concepts that allow characterizing the formality or motivation of relationships.

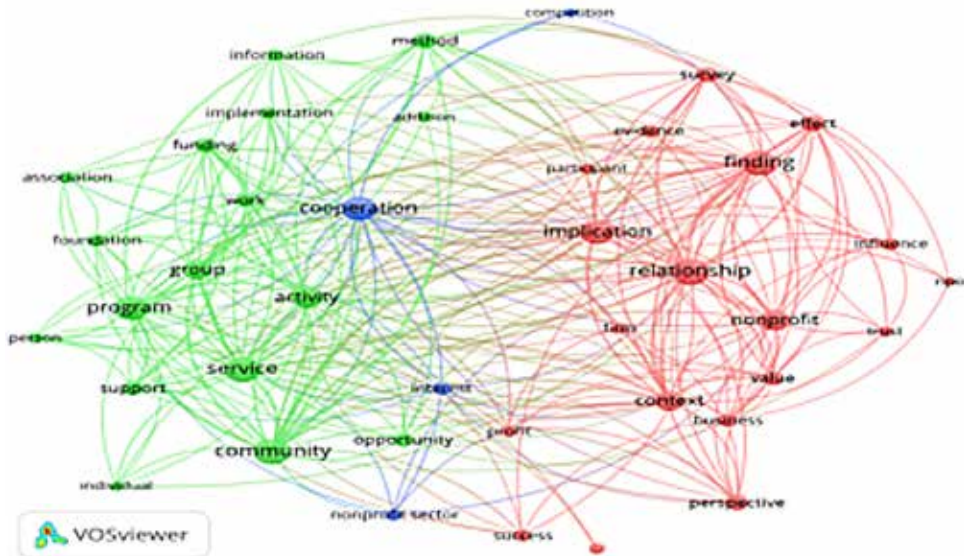


Figure 1: Map of co-occurrences of terms, developed from Webscience base data with the use of VosViewer software

Red cluster- Collaborative attributes that favor the success of a partnership are called “relational factors,” such as shared values, opportunistic behavior, trust, commitment and relationship learning, among others. The presence of these factors determines the quality of the relationship, the productive and effective differentiation, and therefore are indicators of the success of the partnership (Barroso-Méndez et al., 2016).

Recently, literature on social partnerships has presented factors that determine the potential for social change within the relationship of partnerships (Seitanidi, 2008) and suggested that for a partnership to increase its potential for social change, partners are required to embrace their responsibilities adaptively so that it is possible to move away from their predefined limiting roles and thus transcend beyond a single dimension of responsibility to provide solutions to problems that require change (Seitanidi et al., 2011). The crucial role of trust in partnership success is highlighted in the study of partnerships between NPOs and companies, it is noted that relationships are often described as the essence of collaboration. Trust is closely associated to the commitment, that involves stakeholders compromise and this sharing of values among organizations thus contributes to trust and commitment, effectively improving relational effects (Méndez et al. 2018). Paradoxically, both are the lubricant and the glue, that is, they facilitate collaborative work and maintain collaboration together (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006).

Most researchers agree that affective commitment, that is, the type of commitment based on an affective predisposition to maintain the relationship, is fundamental because people from different organizations develop emotional bonds with the partners, often as a result of the identification with each other's values. This is the most influential factor for the maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships (Álvarez-gonzález et al., 2017; Berger, Cunningham, & Drumwright, 2004).

In the specific context of collaborations between NPOs and businesses, Bennett, Mousley, & Ali-Choudhury (2008) identify the factors that encourage and / or obstruct the effective transfer of knowledge between organizations; among them the credibility of the source (the extent to which it is perceived as a specialist, respectable and trustworthy), so if an NPO relies and becomes emotionally involved with a company, it will be predisposed to adopt business tools (Álvarez-gonzález et al., 2017). Previous studies focus on the analysis of value creation processes and micro processes involved in partnerships, highlighting the importance of collaborative relationship during the formation and implementation of partnership in improving value creation and partnership success (Barroso-Méndez et al., 2016).

Green cluster – The way in which activities, services and support are divided, organized and coordinated, may provoke significant impacts. Thus, the importance and attention that has been given to the organizational structure is verified, since this is the authoritative set of responsibility, authority, communication and decisions of organizations, being that this is the fundamental element to keep the focus on the objectives (Jang et al., 2016). In a more general level, the impacts fluctuate from improving the social need identified to changed structural roles for each sector, meaning that the impacts may help others outside collaborating organizations (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). The partnership building stage is a key determinant for the success of the partnership, it includes the processes where partners establish the initial conditions or problems to be addressed. Different authors have emphasized some relational factors that can improve the formation stage and consequently the success of the partnership. Some authors (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Barroso-Méndez et al., 2016) suggest that values shared between partners and expressed through the initial articulation of a problem can facilitate communication between partners, conflict resolution and generate mutual trust.

Likewise, other authors (Barroso-Méndez et al., 2016) point out that opportunistic behavior is a “relational factor” in the formation stage, and it is important to be taken into account in order to have success in the partnerships, because opportunistic actions can negatively affect relations between companies and NPOs. In fact, high levels of opportunism are often associated with alliances between companies. Therefore, this factor may cause the end of the partnership.

Building shared values can be explained as the degree to which partners have shared beliefs, behaviors, goals, and shared, appropriate or inappropriate, right or wrong work. In this sense, shared values are norms that guide the adequacy of the actions that are performed (García Cruz & Arenas Gaitán, 2006). When partners realize that the other party has chosen the appropriate actions, they are willing to increase their level of trust and commitment (Barroso-Méndez et al., 2016).

Blue cluster – the last cluster to be analyzed relates two significant concepts, formality and motivations inherent to the relationships. Being the rule of conduct generally accepted or agreed in social relations, when there is high motivation among members, the organizational climate translates into relationships of satisfaction, interest and cooperation (Maximiano, 2000).

In figure 2 we present a co-citations map, that is, authors whose works are typically referenced together within the articles of the area, thus denoting proximity between the themes addressed by them. In order to extract greater meaning from the results, the minimum number of references to articles was established as 25. This tool allowed the division of data into two clusters.

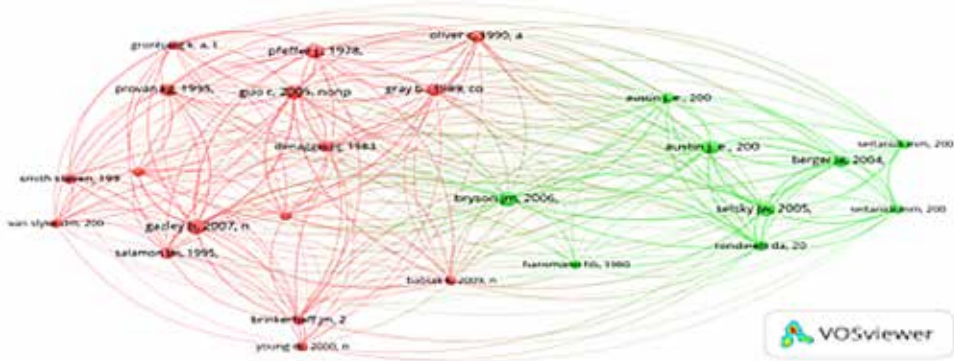
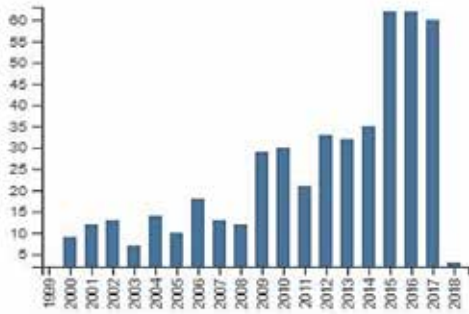


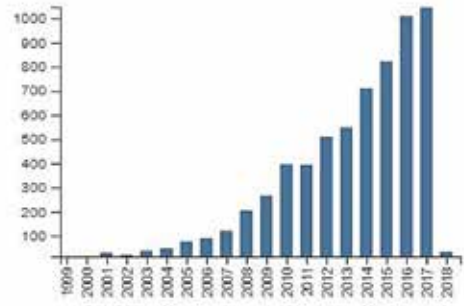
Figure 2: Map of co-author citations, developed from data base Webscience with the use of VosViewer software

Papers found in green cluster, generally, assess the effectiveness of NPOs' collaborative relationships through the relationship between the implementation of these partnerships and the impact created, or results achieved. Measuring these results and realizing how significant and lasting changes have been produced in the target. Red cluster has the vision based and focused on the criteria of effectiveness in collaborative relationships, focusing its attention on the analysis of the extent to which the results are being achieved, as well as on the optimization of the application of resources, and this last part leads us to the meaning of efficiency. Summarising, in this cluster papers study possible threats, resource dependency, institutional perspectives, analysing networks to strengthen partnerships, and question the next directions.

The study of the relationships among NPOs and, especially, intersectoral partnerships has become a significant trend in recent years (Selsky & Parker, 2005). Collaborations between sectors have been widely adopted by them as a working mechanism (Jamali & Keshishian, 2009) and it is possible to verify this through the proliferation of relevant information during the investigation. The study of collaborations that occur in NPOs has increase exponentially. Looking at graphic 1, between 1999 and 2014, we can see a peak of publications with about 35 papers. After this period, the interest for the topic gained expressiveness, reaching 62 articles published in the following years.



Graphic 1: Items published by year



Graphic 2: Citations by year

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper proposes to study the collaborative relationships of the NPOs, first from a theoretical point of view, the definitions and characteristics were deepened. It has been found that collaborative relationships can have many forms and natures that can be distinct in commitment and value creation, being vital to NPOs as well as to their partners. The quality of the relationship is highly connected with the benefits identified by the partners, as well as by the nature of these benefits, i.e. the generic interpretation of the power and stability of a relationship.

Next, an analysis of scientific papers was carried out based on a research in the Web of Science database. The papers were analysed and later a map of co-occurrences of terms and a map of co-citations was created using the VosViewer software. Analysing the results, it was possible to verify through the formed clusters that shared values, opportunistic behaviour, trust, commitment and relationship learning leads to the success of a partnership. On the other hand, the construction of shared values are norms that guide the adequacy of the actions that are performed. And when partners realize that the other party has chosen the appropriate actions, they are willing to increase their level of trust and commitment.

Finally, it has become clear that the study of relations between NPOs and especially intersectoral partnerships has become a significant trend in recent years, since the collaborations between sectors have been widely adopted as a working mechanism. Although, is critical to mention that the partners choice is absolutely essential to this scenario, and has future research, we suggest consider the need for an adequate adjustment among companies and NPOs, in order to work on potential long-term relationship.

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