

## ISTR's Working Paper Series

### Four Ways in Which Social Accountability and Open Government Interventions Bridge the State and Society

Paper presented in the 12<sup>th</sup> ISTR Conference in Stockholm, Sweden – Ersta Sköndal University College<sup>1</sup>

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016

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#### Abstract

Social accountability and open government approaches to improve the provision of public goods and services increasingly prioritize collaboration, constructive engagement, and co-production between state and civil society actors. This growth does not come in a one-size fits all model of collaborative engagement. Yet, little is known about the conditions under which different forms of collaboration evolve and bring about change. This paper seeks to contribute to the literature and practice of collaborative engagement by presenting a typology of state-society bridges through social accountability and open government interventions.

Four types of collaborative engagement are identified: inclusive, targeted, restrictive and detached. These types are the result of a theoretical-empirical exercise that focuses on the interaction between context, strategy and organization as three interrelated variables that jointly have greater potential to account for the results of collaboration than each one of them separately. To operationalize the variables, four key dimensions are identified in the literature and practices of social accountability, open governance, and co-production of public services and control. These are: (i) capacities of the partnership; (ii) fit with the context; (iii) complexity of strategy; (iv) adaptability for learning.

The paper illustrates the types and the potential of this heuristic device for understanding when, how and why different forms of collaboration could shape change on the ground. A series of local social accountability and open governance interventions in select Brazilian cities, researched in 2015 and 2016, is presented.

The Brazilian experience suggests that, in the implementation of collaborative open government and social accountability strategies, the actions (as opposed to static plans or structures) serve as bridges between components of the state and elements of the societies to which they belong. Different types of

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<sup>1</sup> The paper was also presented in the 3rd International Conference on Democratic Governance in Washington, DC, United States, July, 2016.

bridges can help make inroads in understanding the potential and limits of state-society engagement to tackle public policy and governance problems.

The diverse local political contexts in which action happens shapes and, over time, can be shaped by organizational structures and strategies that make up different forms of engagement. Yet, progress is neither automatic nor guaranteed. Strategies can revert in less promising directions. In fact, state-society collaboration fits with context, strategy and organization and delivers after cycles of experimentation and learning rather than one-off instances of engagement.

**Key-words:** social accountability; open government; co-production of control; adaptive learning; governance in Brazilian municipalities.

## I. The eruption of new state-society bridges

Social accountability and open government approaches have grown exponentially around the world in the last decades (Grandvoinnet, Aslam, and Raha, 2015; Edwards and McGee, 2016). We have seen an increase in efforts to extend and increase the capacity of citizens to mobilize and act through a range of tools and tactics that aim to tackle policy-problems, to co-produce services and solutions for collective problems with state officials (Ostrom, 1996; Brandsen and Honingh, 2015; Schommer et al., 2015), and to hold them accountable.

Examples of new practices in this field include Moldovan and Filipino civil society groups working with public officials to contribute to improved education outcomes (Vlad et al., 2016a; 2016b; Guerzovich and Rosenzweig, 2013), groups in Ghana, India, South Africa, and Argentina, monitoring fiscal flows (IBP, 2016). In Brazil, citizens and public servants have mobilized for the approval of the Clean Record Act (*Lei da Ficha Limpa*) that aims to bar corrupt politicians from running for office, and civil society groups are co-producing control with Audit Institutions (Doin *et al.*, 2012; Schommer and Guerzovich, 2016). While many of these efforts have grown from organic demands in each country, others have been inspired or imported from abroad. Either way, social accountability and open government efforts are linked to different degrees to broader international networks and flows of ideas, and technical and financial resources.

Internationally, it is increasingly thought that there are some governance and development problems that are more likely to be solved by transforming the adversarial culture of state-society engagement that has historically driven accountability advocacy (Guerzovich and Poli, 2014c; OGP, 2015; GPSA, 2016a). This does not mean that collaboration is helpful for all problems and situations. There are instances in which constructive engagement approaches may not be available to drive desired social change, leaving citizens to resort to more adversarial forms of engagement. Nevertheless, many stakeholders are increasingly supporting social accountability approaches that prioritize collaboration, constructive engagement, and co-production across state and civil society actors. Yet, little is known about (i) the conditions under which collaboration emerges and new bridges occur and work, (ii) when to pick confrontation vs. collaboration (Kosack and Fung, 2014; for some sector-specific insights Wampler and Touchton 2015; Wampler 2014), and (iii) the conditions of collaboration that produce change (Guerzovich and Moses, 2016). As for collaborative engagement taking different forms and playing different functions, there is a knowledge gap about which types are better suited to contribute to desired outcomes and impacts in particular circumstances.

This paper seeks to link theory and practice and contribute to this debate. The Brazilian experience suggests the implementation of open government and social accountability strategies – the actions rather

than the plans or the structures - serve as bridges between components of the state and elements of the societies to which they belong. The diverse local political contexts in which action happens shapes and, over time, can be shaped by organizational structures and strategies. State-society collaboration fits with context, strategy and organization and delivers after cycles of experimentation and learning rather than as one-off instances (on open governance as experimentation, see Hudson 2015; 2016).

In the next section, a deeper discussion of the state of knowledge in the field is presented, which contributes to define a working presumption: collaborative social accountability and open government interventions are more likely to be effective when the link between strategy, context, and organization reinforce each other. Still, these three factors vary. So, what does this interaction look like in practice? Section III introduces a typology of collaborative engagement for social accountability and open government interventions. In Section IV, the types are illustrated with the case of five cities in Brazil, and why and how different types can be associated to different pathways to effective results is explained. Section V concludes the investigation discussing implications of the analysis for efforts in the field focused on supporting and/or implementing collaborative forms of engagement in the social accountability and open government fields.

## **II. Social Accountability, Open Government, Co-production**

The idea of on mutual engagement between public servants and citizens to deal with public problems and to deliver public services is a common element of the concepts of social accountability and open government. Both can be associated to the concept and practice of co-production of public goods and services – a field that has generally evolved in parallel. While recognizing the novelty and evolving character of these concepts, in this paper they are considered as:

**Social accountability** is the extent and capacity of citizens to mobilize and take actions beyond elections to engage, trigger need-based responses, hold accountable the state officials and service providers and/or bring about redress (Grandvoinet, Aslam, and Raha, 2015). Constructive engagement approaches to social accountability are a subset in which citizens' privilege acting as partners and cooperating with select service providers and/or public officials to achieve joint goals – as opposed to confrontational, adversarial strategies that are perched on the development of countervailing power (GPSA 2015; Fung and Kosack, 2013).

**Open government** is a novel, ambiguous and fuzzy concept (Edwards and McGee, 2016), premised on citizens, civil society and governments working together, sharing interests to tackle governance and development challenges (OGP, 2015; 2016). Sustainable transparency, accountability, participation and responsiveness of government to their own citizens, sometimes aided by technology, are key components of this approach (OGP, 2016).

**Co-production** - a strategy to design and deliver public goods and services through the mutual and continuous engagement of government and citizens (users), who share power, resources and responsibilities, in a hands-on approach (Verschuere, Brandsen and Pestoff, 2013; Brudney and England, 1983; Salm, 2014). In a classical definition from the 1970's, Ostrom (1996, p. 1073) considers co-production as "the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not 'in' the same organization". The co-production can occur in the phase of design or planning of a service; in the phase of implementation or delivery; or both in the design/planning phase and delivery/implementation phase (Bovaird, 2007; Brandsen and Honingh, 2015).

Co-production, social accountability, and open government are distinct but partly overlapping concepts and practices. Their shared goals (improved policy and governance and development outcomes), multi-stakeholder nature, and common pillars such as transparency, state-society engagement and accountability mechanisms link them. Many times one helps to operationalize the other.

Amid this connection, the notion of **co-production of information and control** is particularly relevant. That is “a mutual and continuous engagement between regular producers of information and control in public administration (government agencies) and users or those interested in information and control (citizens, individually or organized into councils, groups, and associations)” (Schommer et. al, 2015, p. 1377).

As social accountability and open government action has exploded, so have efforts to map different types of social accountability and open government efforts and understand whether they actually achieve results (Carter, 2014; Westhorp et al., 2014; Baltazar and Sepúlveda, 2015; Renzio and Wehner, 2015; Carothers et al, 2016; O’Meally, 2013; World Bank, 2016a; World Bank, 2016b). These reviews suggest that social accountability and open government interventions can produce results, in other words, the concept has been proven (Fox, 2014). However, we know less about when social accountability and open government is more likely to produce results.

One of the reasons identified by the literature for this knowledge gap is that social accountability and open government interventions aim to tackle complex service delivery and political problems (McGee and Gaventa, 2013). This means that the pathway between an intervention and a desired result is rarely certain and linear. Many researchers argue that we need to move beyond thinking in terms of standard theoretical prescriptions that travel across contexts and asking why certain solutions work or not. Instead, we need to start by asking when and how different forms of social accountability and open government interventions work (or not) as they interact with concrete environments. In other words, the literature asks us to look deeper at the interaction of contextual factors (O’Meally, 2013; Guerzovich and Rosenzweig, 2014; Kosack and Fung, 2014; Grandvoinet, Aslam, and Raha, 2015; World Bank, 2016a) and types of interventions (or processes) as a key to understand results (Sharma and Rocha Menocal, 2008; Falleti and Lynch, 2009; Guerzovich, 2010; Guerzovich and Moses 2016).

Yet, we know that standard tools deployed by individual actors over short-periods of time (or tactical approaches) rarely suffice to navigate complex politics and achieve sustainable transformational results. But, we do not know under which conditions long-term, multi-stakeholder, multi-pronged and adaptive efforts that harness the context (or strategic approaches) work. (Guerzovich 2010; 2011; Guerzovich and Giraudy, 2011; Guerzovich and Poli, 2014b; Fox, 2014).

Some research suggests organizational variables are also likely to help understand whether social accountability and open government interventions pay-off (Guerzovich and Moses 2016; on the more general point Dasandi, Marquette and Robinson, 2016). In fact, many have argued that interventions in this field and in development broadly, are limited by design, are shaped by civil society groups’ needs to attract funds (e.g. Cooley and Ron, 2002; Wampler and Touchton 2015), and work with advocacy models that are not fit for the purpose (Guerzovich, 2010; 2011; Halloran, 2015). Beyond these organizational factors, other factors could include resource mobilization, decision-making procedures, learning and capacity building processes, number and diversity of membership, technical know-how, leader’s characteristics, among others.

In short, the interaction of strategy, context, and organization is a frontier in the literature about effective social accountability and open government intervention, generally, and collaborative interventions, in particular. In fact, many of the new international interventions that promote collaboration in the field try to reconcile the evidence about the inability of alternatives to fulfill promises with the recognition that different forms of collaborative strategies may be more or less effective given organizational and contextual factors (Guerzovich and Poli, 2014c; GPSA, 2015). Still, these debates are often not specific enough to be useful for practitioners. For instance, some believe that:

*despite the proclamations that “context matters,” however, it’s much harder to articulate exactly how it matters. This remains a challenge despite valuable efforts to identify and define key contextual factors. With few exceptions, however, the literature available tends to be dense and often theoretical, rather than diving into how, specifically, contextual factors shape CSO decision-making and effectiveness. Moreover, the macro-level focus of much of this literature largely overlooks the intricate contextual considerations critical to the success of local-level reform efforts -- where the rubber hits the road in much (social accountability) work (Polk and Knox, 2015).*

This paper seeks to move this frontier forward by exploring the question: What does it mean in practice that context, organization and strategy matter for the effectiveness of collaborative social accountability and open government efforts? To do so, the next section presents a typology of engagement for social accountability and open government interventions.

### **III. A typology of engagement in social accountability and open government**

This section introduces a typology of engagement in social accountability and open government, clustering four types of engagement (inclusive, targeted, restrictive and detached), informed by the literature on co-production.

#### **A) Building the typology – Methodology**

The typology of engagement in social accountability and open government is a result of an inductive-deductive exercise to build a heuristic device that focuses on the interaction between context, strategy and organization as three interrelated variables that jointly have greater potential to account for results (and operationalize and act on them) than each one of them separately. The focus is at the local level. Context is considered as a configuration of concrete factors outside the control of practitioners that affect the likely success of their strategies and interventions. Organization includes the structured relationships, resources, procedures, and knowledge articulated in a regular and continuous basis around a common goal. Strategy is considered as a broad plan of action linking inputs to desired outcomes and impacts.

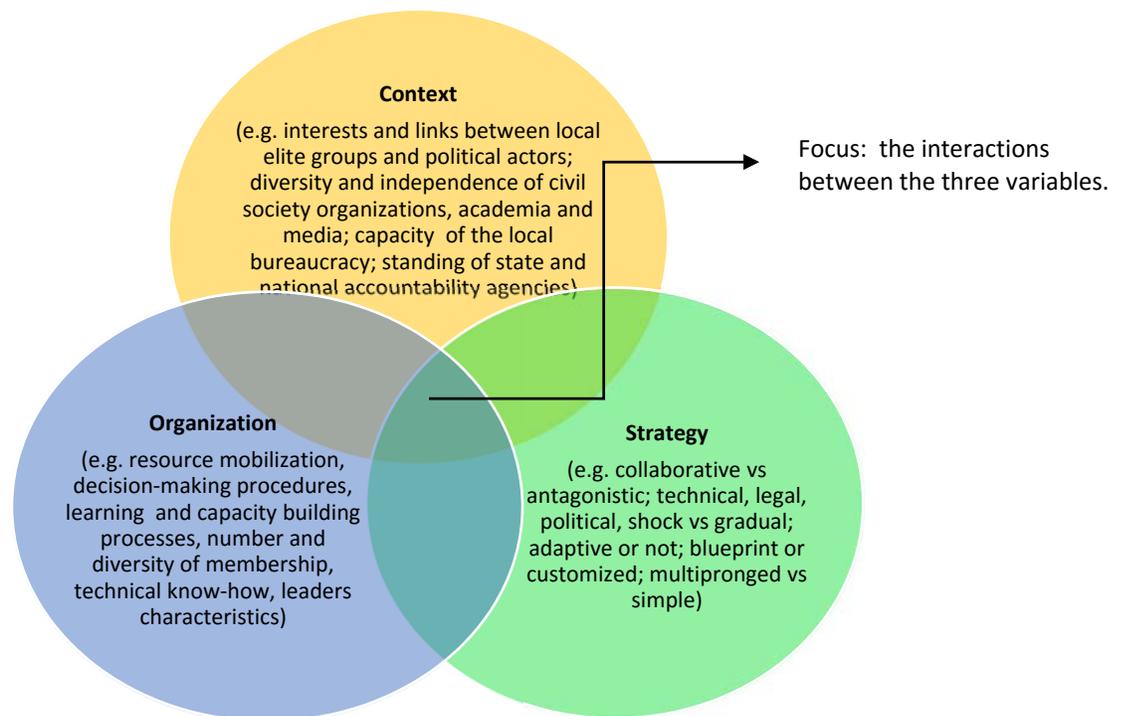


Figure 1: Context, Strategy, and Organizational Structures

The research was developed in four main phases (conceptualization, localization, field work and desk analysis, and development and refinement of the typology). First, the **conceptualization**, based on literature of social accountability, open government and co-production of information and control, allowed to explore the interconnections between these concepts and to identify gaps and questions to be empirically explored. Documents and previous experience with initiatives in different countries were also considered.

Then **Brazil was selected** as the national context to explore. The country has experienced, in recent decades, a dynamic process of building democratic governance, fighting corruption and promoting transparency and quality of public expenditure (see e.g. Michener and Pereira 2016; Taylor and Power 2011; Taylor and Praça 2014; Wampler, 2014; 2015; Wampler and Touchoun 2015). This includes innovations in citizen participation, regulation and a diverse and complementary set of tactics, applied by different organizations and networks, in a collaborative and/or adversarial attitude, at different levels - national and local, institutionalized and non-institutionalized. There are advances, setbacks and adaptation, at different levels of integration and mutual influence (Schommer and Guertzovich, 2016; also see Baiocchi, Heller and Silva, 2011). Currently, the country is dealing with a political and economic crisis, that is, to some extent, a result of the maturation of Brazilian political culture, and the recent improvements in accountability and open government. This includes new coordination mechanisms among institutional bodies and the co-production of information and control (Loureiro et al., 2012; Doin et al., 2012; Schommer, Dahmer and Spaniol, 2014; Schommer et al., 2015).

Besides the national reforms linked to an international agenda – for instance, the Access to Information Act, approved in 2011, the most noteworthy innovations seem to be happening in Brazilian municipalities (Schommer and Guerzovich, 2016). Multi stakeholder initiatives at the local level, in some contexts, are showing that insurgency about corruption and bad quality in public services can boost the strategic engagement of different actors, combining adversarial and collaborative courses of action to produce results in fighting corruption, improving public administration and building democratic governance at the local level.

The local experiences vary across a range of contextual, organizational and strategic variables. Although there are common contextual features and mechanisms being spread all over the country, there are significant variations in terms of interventions and results among cities and areas of public services. This means that we can apply sub-national comparative methodology, leveraging similarities and differences within a single country<sup>i</sup>. This approach, in turn, enables to describe and explain with greater confidence what the key aspects of each type are and how different types can be associated to different pathways to effective results<sup>ii</sup>.

The next step was an exploratory investigation, including field work and desk analysis conducted in 2015 with a focus on the development and experience of Brazilian social observatories (SOs). A social observatory is a non-partisan and non-profit space to bring citizens and organizations from civil society together to transform their right to be angry into work to promote transparency and better use of public resources. The first observatory was created in Maringa, in Southern Brazil in 2006. Today there are 96 organizations operating in 17 Brazilian states. SOs use the expertise of local citizens/professionals to help (working with) public agents to reduce corruption and the waste of public resources, the lack of qualification and the discontinuity in public policies, projects and services. Their entry point to achieve these goals is procurement, but effectiveness in terms of engagement with the public sector and results are uneven across SOs (Guerzovich and Schommer, 2016).

The research included, **first**, interviews, participation in a national meeting of social observatories and local events, and revising documents and studies about these organizations in Brazil. **Second**, a survey based on a structured questionnaire, answered by 28 observatories, which made it possible to develop a primary version of the typology, and to select the cases to explore in depth. The survey enabled to rank the observatories according to how they reported they were doing in terms of functional equivalent indicators capturing the theoretical dimensions discussed below.

Initially, the analysis focused on the civil organization and its action to engage with the local context. Progressively, this focus changed to the action, or the interaction between context, strategy and organizations (state or non-state actors). The exploration suggested that it is the type of engagement – or the bridge – that links these three variables, rather than a characteristic of the organization that matters to understand state-society collaboration and its effectiveness.

**Third**, preliminary in-depth qualitative research in a sub-set of observatories. **Fourth**, the study of three cases/cities – Londrina, Itajaí and Rondonópolis, based on participation in meetings, documents, and interviews with public officials, observatories volunteers and staff, journalists and partners, in a project with U4 (Guerzovich and Schommer, 2016).

Through this inductive-deductive approach **the typology was developed and refined**, analyzing data obtained in the field work, literature, and data from other research about Brazilian cities, like Blumenau

and Florianópolis, where it was possible to analyze social accountability, co-production and open government initiatives.

### **B) Building the typology - the four characteristics of state-society engagements**

Four interconnected dimensions compose the typology: (i) capacities of the partnership; (ii) fit with the context; (iii) complexity of strategy; (iv) adaptability for learning.

**First, capacities of the partnership - the willingness and ability of an organization to act together with others to solve public problems** in ways that bolster individual organizations' political and technical capacities. Briggs (2008) calls this "civic capacity". The work presented here focuses on engagement of different stakeholders across state and civil society. It is built on the assumption, consistent with the literature reviewed, that individual actors are unlikely to trigger sustainable solutions to tackle complex public problems (Johnston and Kpundeh, 2004; Andrews, McConnell, and Wescott, 2010; Guertzovich and Giraudy, 2011; Carothers and Brechenmacher, 2014; Marquette and Pfeiffer, 2015; Booth, 2012; Kosack and Fung, 2014; Fox, 2014; Kissler and Heidemann, 2006; Henrikssen, Smith and Zimmer, 2015; Pestoff, 2015).

It is also part of a broader set of research in social and political sciences, that moves away from the state society (or supply and demand of accountability) dichotomy, towards an understanding that effectiveness in solving complex governance problems lies at the interaction of segments of both actors (Grandvoinnet et.al. 2015 cf. World Development Report 2004). In the field of public administration, the contemporary debate also emphasizes the diversity of actors involved in policy design and provision of public services, and the hybridity of forms to deliver it. This enhances the innovation collective capacity to deal with complex challenges (Pestoff, 2015; Henrikssen, Smith and Zimmer, 2015).

The co-production of public goods and services is one of the strategies to put this in practice. Both governmental agents and citizens play an active role, sharing responsibilities, capacities and resources (Kissler and Heidemann, 2006; Salm, 2014; Pestoff, 2015). Co-production involves a relationship between regular providers of a particular service (professionals), and (groups of) citizens/users, requiring direct and active contributions from these citizens for the work to happen (Brandsen and Hoeningh, 2015). The technical and institutional capacities of professional providers are gathered with the perception and knowledge of people who live with the problem – which is something no one else can have.

This kind of collaboration adds value by enabling social accountability and open government reformers in state and civil society to draw on the diverse capacities that other stakeholders may have to strengthen change efforts (Poli and Guertzovich, 2016). However, in general, collective action is hard, risky and costly for those seeking sustainability<sup>iii</sup>. State-society collaboration, including co-production, is a way to share the risks and to combine individual and mutual interests and benefits (Verschuere, Brandsen and Pestoff, 2012), preserving its public purpose or nature.

Since the co-production alternatives are deeply connected with the context in which people live and face problems, the solutions are dependent on their resources and engagement, and are often not replicable in other contexts. Meanwhile, even when there are broader institutional incentives, the characteristics of co-production are defined in each situation, by the people engaged in a specific problem or service. Both the government and the citizens in each context can favor it or crowd it out, although neither citizens nor government alone, can determine more or less co-production (Pestoff, 2015). The most important are

the relationship, the mutual confidence, the shared repertoire and the results that are developed and continuously transformed in practice. These may be critical reasons as to why learning to navigate politics adaptively is related to co-production processes.

Paradoxically, many times reformers lack the capacities to overcome collective action problems, actively manage relationships, build trust, and advance joint projects. Furthermore, in social accountability and open government, collaboration and co-production is hard, because it entails changing *business as usual* of organizations in the field – which have often developed through confronting each other<sup>iv</sup>. For example, a study on the effectiveness of the Open Government Partnership in five countries found that state-society collective action is limited and generally circumscribed to select groups and actors. Where it has been more successful (Mexico and the Philippines), action has depended on pro-reform actors who were willing and able to link open government processes to their political strategies, organizational needs, and other pre-existing contextual conditions. This configuration of factors was not present in less successful experiences in Costa Rica, Albania, and Tanzania (Guerzovich and Moses, 2016).

Similarly, recent research by the International Budget Partnership has provided the following diagnostic: “we need to shift beyond a narrow focus on building the technical skills and knowledge of CSOs to influence the executive arm of government to a more holistic approach that recognizes the complementary roles of different actors” (Van Zyl and Renzio, 2016; Larsen, 2016). The research found that cooperation across state and society tends to increase impact but it is neither widespread nor systematic in this segment of the field. Contextual factors such as the absence of institutional arrangements fostering citizens access to government and cooperation partly account for this status quo, as do organizational factors, including fragmented external support to budget accountability actors by donors and international non-governmental organizations, incentives for the development of relationships, and other skills.

The case of open budget reformers is partly overlapping with those faced in the broader open government and social accountability fields. While the former can bolster their efforts by linking to similar actors facing similar capacity challenges in budget ecosystems across a broad range of countries (Renzio, 2016), the stakeholders that matter for social accountability and open government efforts focused on health or education may vary with sectoral ecosystems. Key stakeholders and capacity challenges may even vary if the focus is on opening bidding for school meal or textbooks, i.e. on different problems within a sector.

This means that most reformers in the field need to identify and prioritize who may complement their expertise, outreach capacity and influence in working towards the proposed objectives. What resources do they bring and what does it take to keep them involved? Do these partners and allies plan to continue business as usual so that in practice partners and allies exchange information, divide tasks and go about their work in parallel? Or, do they plan to pool together strategies and resources in ways that actually bolster the proposed intervention’s impacts? And do these efforts engage those most affected by the problem at hand or do they disempower and/or underrepresent them, like other open government and co-production efforts (Verschuere, Brandsen and Pestoff, 2012)? Furthermore, until recently, most budget work focused on the co-planning or co-designing of budgets (Bovaird, 2007), and, at times, co-assessing with supreme audit institutions (SAIs y OG 2016), rather than in co-implementation – a critical step for moving open government action closer to service delivery outcomes.

In summary, the capacities of the partnerships for change-making can vary from a limited subset of individuals and organizations, with no sustained multi-stakeholder coalitions and no co-production, to a

more inclusive pattern, with a diverse set of individuals and organizations across the state and civil society, in broader and continuous multi-stakeholder coalitions, and co-production in specific services (Table 1). These features may be related to the ability of the partners to harness the context and tackle specific problems.

**Second, fit the context - the willingness and ability of an organization (or organizations) to deploy a strategy that harnesses the context by bridging segments of state and society** (actors, institutions, norms, and processes).

Knowledge in social accountability and open government fields suggests that contextual factors, including broader governance arrangements, local knowledge and resources, and institutional forces shape the extent to which changes to accountability arrangements are feasible (Guerzovich and Poli 2014d). Accordingly, social accountability and open government efforts that aim to be effective should count on contextualized, realistic strategies to contribute to solving policy problems and, in due course, transforming the very context. This may mean, for example, devising and implementing a set of interventions that tap on the existing incentives of the various public sector institutions [with influence and power over the issue at different junctures of the policy-making cycle] to respond in a positive direction to the intervention, changing or seeking to strengthen those incentives in context.

The co-production literature highlights the value of the engagement of those affected by a problem in a particular context. This enables the combination of contextualized views of a problem and possible ways to deal with it with technical and institutional skills and resources needed to do so. In other words, the **bridge** between stakeholders through action is perched on a view of context that, through joint action, seeks to make the most of the interplay between forces at the micro and macro levels of society (Pestoff, 2015). The alternatives developed in each context depend of valuing, institutional and sociopolitical dimensions, which is a condition and also a result of practices being developed in the interplay between the local, the national and the international levels (Schommer et al. 2015). In this way, action happens in a world in which neither context nor blueprints are king.

For instance, the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) and Care Malawi are implementing projects aimed at strengthening accountability and the effectiveness of textbook distribution in the country. To implement this project, the organizations have devised a social accountability strategy that is based on building a strong mutually-beneficial relationship with school stakeholders as well as with the Supplies Unit of the Ministry of Education, so that the latter can and does lever information gathered at the school level to inform its decision-making about textbooks (GPSA, 2016b).

However, many times organizations ignore or bypass these opportunities and challenges to applying a standard approach, such as importing a best practice from elsewhere. For instance, Transparency and Accountability technology platforms tend to trigger more responses from government when they are designed considering the interests of users of information and government efforts, but many times information technology interventions fail to do so (Peixoto and Fox, 2016). It is more frequent to find state and civil society groups importing formal, technical consultation processes from the Open Government Partnership than leveraging them to navigate the politics of reform (Guerzovich and Moses, 2016). Research explains that strategic options that are detached from context are less likely to help build and sustain engagement for problem solving, let alone transform contexts over time (O'Meally 2013; Grandvoinet et.al. 2015). Tacit knowledge in the field which is codified in the table below suggests that organizational incentives, funding, cultures, mandates, among other factors, may have a role in pushing

organizations in different strategic directions, associated with different types of bridges between state and society, described in Table 1 - detached, restrictive, targeted or inclusive.

**Third, complexity of strategy - the willingness and ability of an organization (or organizations) to prioritize the cluster of procedures and methods that are most likely to pay-off their intended, strategic goals** (Poli, Giraudy and Guerzovich, 2010). Research in social accountability and open government fields shows that, in theory, organizations can use a range of discreet, focused procedures, or methods for promoting a desired end or result, i.e. tactics. For instance, anticorruption advocates can lever a range of tactics, including but not limited to, investigation of corruption cases and litigation, regulatory drafting, monitoring, social audits and other diagnostics of anticorruption systems, awareness raising campaigns, participation in policy dialogues, mobilization of the press and the citizenry. Advocates of open budgets can use combinations of presentations of evidence to members of the executive branch of government, litigation as a means to enforce greater accountability, capacity building of legislators as agents of fiscalization, partnerships with supreme audits institutions and mobilization of citizens for campaigns seeking reforms, among other tactics (Overy, 2011).

Proponents of social accountability and open government change have scarce resources so financial and non-financial investments in a particular tactic, necessarily limit the resources that can be directed towards other tactics. The challenge in light of these tactical toolkits is to bet on the specific group of tactics that is likely to provide the best value for investment for a given organization's strategy in a given place and time (Guerzovich and Poli, 2014e).

In practice, civil society groups restrict themselves to a limited set of tactics. The question is how organizations pick that group of tactics. One route, consistent with the growing literature in political economy in the field, is to prioritize tactics that are relevant in a given context or sector. The combination of tactics that may work to open the education sector in the Dominican Republic may not work in the health sector in the country or to open the education sector in Brazil (Guerzovich, Giraudy and Zucchini 2011). Politics varies across countries but also across sectors. Furthermore, while in one setting the entry point for reform is a combination of actors and organizations that respond to citizens' pressure or other tactics; at other junctures the key veto points may not be responsive to those tactics or the tactics may not be feasible.

The ability to infuse this kind of thinking into a social accountability strategy may explain the wins and sustainability of the results achieved by the Scoala Mea project in the education sector in Moldova. In 2014, this civil society led-initiative started implementing public budget hearings at the school level as well as producing education budget analyses and periodically discussing them with the Ministries of Education and Finance at the central level (Vlad, 2014; 2016). By 2016, the context in the country had changed, including the coalition in power in the central government, and the project team had learned a number of lessons about what was possible or not at the school and regional levels. Scoala Mea opted to formalize its relationship with the central government and take steps to better integrate local-level work with the national policy and budget processes and interests, for instance meeting the Ministry of Education's interest in obtaining direct feedback from students and the school community. It is also pivoting the strategy towards officials at the regional level to gain influence on school spending and improving the articulation of local level tools (Vlad et al. 2016a; 2016b). Conversely, one of the great challenges faced by the Vigilantes Project in the Dominican Republic to achieve results are the difficulties

it faced adjusting a social accountability strategy devised at the moment of peak of social movements in the country to the demobilization of these movements (Guerzovich, 2015).

In the cases of the social accountability initiatives in Moldova and the Dominican Republic, contextual changes played a role in determining the tactics that could lend themselves to more effective state-society engagement (or not). The challenge is that too often social accountability and open government proponents are unclear about why their choice of social accountability tools is realistic and likely to be actionable and effective, given the structure of the policy process in their context and the political incentives and constraints facing key government actors<sup>v</sup>. Other routes to determine priorities can be intuitive hunches or replicating what organizations are already doing or what they have done in the past. For example, anticorruption organizations can draw on the above mentioned tactics, however, as organizations build their strengths, staffing, fundraising and brands around a tool rather than a strategy, they find it very hard to move beyond their comfort zone – even if change is not driven by single tactics or tools (Guerzovich, 2011, Chapter 6).

The interaction of different individuals and organizations during the process potentially amplifies the possible set of tactics, since diverse knowledge and resources are shared, and as result of learning from working together, including trial and error (for example, see Dzhunushalieva, *et.al.* 2016). The achievement of this potential can vary from a detached type of state-society bridge, where the complexity of the strategy is limited; the actors apply blueprints imported to the local context without attention to incentives and action on the ground; the set of tactics are disconnected from each other, and; there is no locally owned co-production to solve problems. In the other extreme, inclusive, there is a range of tactics that work with each other. These tactics are used by stakeholders to achieve joint goals leveraging diverse contextual and organizational resources. There are different forms of collaboration involving segments of society and the government, and; there is co-production in various ways and at different levels of institutionalization (see Table 1).

**Fourth, adaptability for learning - flexibility to incorporate learning to manage the intervention as the glue that helps engagement become resilient over time.** This characteristic, that is essentially political learning, is consistent with current calls and research in social accountability and open government field that suggests that the export of technical best practices without adaptation to politics and context does not work (see the forthcoming World Development Report 2017, The World Bank 2016c). This approach is consistent with current calls to support “strategic” anticorruption and social accountability (Guerzovich, 2011; Guerzovich and Poli, 2014c), “doing development differently” (DDD, 2016), and “thinking and working politically”<sup>vi</sup>. These are three emerging movements in development based on parallel bodies of literature that highlight the importance of implementing politically-smart interventions, that include considering the big picture (context and strategy), in addition to technical tools.

This transition may be illustrated by the case of the trajectory of the “Linking Education and Accountability for Development” (LEAD) project in Morocco (Bouhamidi et al, 2016). CARE International Morocco (CIM), the lead implementing CSO, initially thought to replicate a best practice tested on a small number of pilot schools on a large number of schools and importing a social accountability tool used in another country in the region. Both attempts failed because the tools were a poor match for the country’s education sector. These obstacles led the team to reflect, learn, and change strategy: the state, school staff and project external funders, CARE, engaged the Near East Foundation (NEF) as well as the National Federation of Parent Associations (FNAPEM), the main advocate for parent and student rights in Morocco at both the local and national levels. These partners provided inputs to implement a more participatory preparatory

phase and laid the groundwork for a locally developed approach. They also found a way to better articulate their intervention to ongoing reforms in the education sector.

The presumption is that learning by doing, iteration, and adaptation are elements that make bridges that link civil society and state open efforts and make them more adaptive, strategic, and politically smart and, in turn, more resilient. The examples of the Scoala Mea or the Mexican open government partnership (Gerson and Nieto 2016), among others, share these characteristics. Experiences of co-production of information and control over a number of years in Brazil shows that “the mutual engagement between citizens and public servants continuously affects the impact and results of the States functions, contributing to shape the structure and make the State action limits more sensitive, fluid, and permeable to the society’s interests. The State apparatus and its specific responsibilities are present, but it assumes a more flexible form” (Schommer et al, 2015, p. 1382). Likewise, these are all instances in which key organizational factors support this kind of learning for resilient engagement<sup>vii</sup>.

These component factors and its interaction make it possible to identify four types of state-society bridges – detached, restrictive, targeted and inclusive, summarized in Table 1. This selection builds on the analysis of four dimensions and 36 concrete indicators of strategic, constructive social accountability interventions (Guerzovich and Poli, 2014b), and the analysis of five cases in Brazilian cities, in the next section. These four characteristics can be observed and provide an imperfect, albeit initial glance regarding the likely ways engagement strategies, contexts, and organizational structure interact in social accountability and open government at one moment in time. As can be inferred, these aspects capture capacities that the literature and new inductive analysis associate with effective collaborative social accountability and open government interventions (Poli and Guerzovich, 2016). Some characteristics of each type here are similar to those identified by Schommer et al. (2015) in different types of accountability and co-production of information and control.

**Table 1 – Types of State-Society Bridges through Social Accountability and Open Government Interventions**

	<b>DETACHED</b>	<b>RESTRICTIVE</b>	<b>TARGETED<sup>viii</sup></b>	<b>INCLUSIVE</b>
<p><b>CAPACITIES OF THE PARTNERSHIP:</b></p> <p><b>STAKEHOLDERS (WHO ACTS?)</b></p>	<p>Limited subset of individuals and organizations.</p> <p>There is no sustained multistakeholder coalitions or partnerships pro-social accountability and open government reformers.</p>	<p>Limited subset of individuals and organizations who sporadically coordinate action.</p> <p>Attempts to build multistakeholder coalitions or partnerships pro-social accountability and open government reforms, but they face discontinuity.</p>	<p>Specially selected set of individuals and organizations in concrete areas of intervention, where multistakeholder coalitions or partnerships and/or co-production may emerge.</p>	<p>Diverse set of individuals and organizations across the state and civil society – broader multi-stakeholder coalitions or partnerships, including co-production in specific services.</p>
<p><b>FIT WITH THE CONTEXT:</b></p> <p><b>RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CONTEXTS (HOW IS THE ACTION?)</b></p>	<p>Inexistent or tenuous by design and/or due to closed space.</p> <p>The local is juxtaposed to the foreign without considering the peculiarities of the specific context, such as existing decision-makers’ incentives, ongoing efforts, and obstacles.</p>	<p>Strives to engage amidst existing or self-made contextual and organizational obstacles. For instance, action taps into existing incentives of stakeholders with the capacity to make relevant decisions in limited junctures of the policy-making cycle.</p>	<p>Reformers explicitly or implicitly acknowledge that each area of intervention has its own technical and political contexts and ways of working, which should inform the type of strategy and organizational development needed to tackle it.</p> <p>Focus on the needs, priorities and capacities of select local stakeholders.</p> <p>In catering to specific stakeholders, reformers aim to complement their own capacities and resources by drawing on existing organizations and institutions in the system, step by step. Manage the risk of overpromising and creating vicious cycles based on disappointment.</p>	<p>Weaves context relevant politics through organizations and strategy.</p> <p>The actors mutually engaged in a specific context implement a strategy that taps into existing capacities and resources of diverse stakeholders - with the capacity to make relevant decisions across the policy-making cycle, and use the strategy to navigate obstacles.</p>

<p><b>COMPLEXITY OF STRATEGY:</b></p> <p><b>LINES OF STRATEGIC ACTION (WHAT ARE THE ACTIONS?)</b></p>	<p>The complexity of strategy is limited.</p> <p>Blueprints imported to the local context without attention to incentives and action on the ground.</p> <p>The set of tactics is disconnected from each other.</p> <p>There is no locally owned co-production to solve problems.</p>	<p>Blueprints imported to the local context, with minor adjustments.</p> <p>Set of tools limited by contextual and organizational factors.</p> <p>There is sporadic and peripheral sharing of information, and coordination for control and/or provision of public goods and services.</p>	<p>Tactics are tailored to specific aims and stakeholders, building on contextual and organizational resources.</p> <p>There is sharing of information and coordination for control and/or provision of public goods and services, and co-production in specific areas.</p>	<p>Range of tactics that work with each other to lever on stakeholders to achieve joint goals leveraging diverse contextual and organizational resources.</p> <p>There are different forms of collaboration involving segments of society and the government.</p> <p>There is co-production in various ways and at different levels of institutionalization.</p>
<p><b>ADAPTABILITY FOR LEARNING:</b></p> <p><b>DYNAMICS OVER TIME (WHEN IS THE ACTION?)</b></p>	<p>Lever external know-how on an ongoing basis, high degree of discontinuity of adaptation through experimentation.</p> <p>The effects over traditional practices, policies and structures, when visible, is limited.</p>	<p>Lever external know-how on an ongoing basis, with instances of locally led course correction.</p> <p>The joint action has some effect but does not transform policy or governance dynamics.</p>	<p>Lever local experience for focused strategic and organizational improvement.</p> <p>Focus on areas where reformers have a better chance of nurturing islands of change contribute to making the policies, the governance dynamics and the state apparatus more sensitive, fluid, and permeable to the society's interests.</p>	<p>Lever local experience for strategic and organizational improvement.</p> <p>Joint multistakeholder learning paves the way to transformative forms of learning by doing.</p> <p>The mutual engagement between citizens and public servants continuously affects the policies results and impacts, and the governance and the organizations functions; this contributes to shape the structures and make the organizational limits more sensitive, fluid, and permeable to the society's interests.</p>
<p><b>TYPE OF ENGAGEMENT (BRIDGE)</b></p>	<p><b>Pier</b></p>	<p><b>Movable Bridge</b></p>	<p><b>Step Stone Bridge</b></p>	<p><b>Cable Stayed Bridge</b></p>

Source: developed by the authors

The typology helps further confidence about the causal homogeneity of types of interventions across distinct countries and sectors and identify which universe of cases can be productively compared. It is presumed that these four types of engagement matter for they open or close different types of opportunities to open government and exercise social accountability. They also shed light on which specific strategies will be more useful for practitioners, depending on the context and the organizations involved.

These issues are explored further in the next section using empirical cases. It is important to note that functional equivalent indicators<sup>ix</sup> are used to group the cases into the types. For instance, the number of regular volunteers and external partners that an observatory has can reflect whether certain social accountability interventions are able to build on and mobilize existing resources in the context. It can also tell us something about its capacities to perform volunteer work (organization) or the nature of its strategy (i.e. does it include many or is it based on a few). Other quantifiable indicators may include observatories' monthly budgets, which can signal whether the social observatory is perceived as legitimate and credible by local citizens, public officials, and/or external stakeholders who are willing, in turn, to mobilize resources for it. Sustainable access to time, political capital, and funding contributes to and enables operations. Another key factor is whether an intervention focuses on a single set of actions or is able to deploy a diverse set of tactics, the latter hints that the stakeholders is able to engage and mobilize diverse resources and capacities available in its community towards collective public problem solving. Different interventions, accordingly, would require different sets of indicators to facilitate measurement equivalences.

#### IV. Four types of engagement in Brazilian cities and implications for effectiveness

This section illustrates the types of state-society engagement looking at cases in which social accountability, open government and, at times co-production, intersect in five Brazilian cities. These cities, briefly described in Table 2 - share a number of national-level commonalities. They are part of the gradual development of Brazilian democracy in which diverse multi-stakeholder's initiatives, including at local level are showing that collaboration can be a driver improving public administration, contributing to the institutionalization of values and mechanisms for fighting corruption, and building democratic governance. The five cities are medium-size, with high Human Development Index, and all of them showed the creation of a social observatory, between 2009 and 2012. Despite these similarities, the fit between organizations, strategies and contexts are different.

**Table 2: How do organizations, strategy, and context fit together in select Brazilian cities?**

	<b>Florianópolis</b>	<b>Rondonópolis</b>	<b>Itajaí</b>	<b>Blumenau</b>	<b>Londrina</b>
<b>Population (IBGE, 2010)</b>	421,240	211,718	183,373	309,011	506.701
<b>State/Region</b>	Santa Catarina, in Southern Brazil	Mato Grosso, Midwest region of Brazil	Santa Catarina, in Southern Brazil	Santa Catarina, in Southern Brazil	Paraná, in Southern Brazil
<b>GDP per capita</b>	R\$ 32,385.04 (US\$10274.44)	R\$26,064.26 (US\$ 8269.12)	R\$ 83,082.62 (US\$ 26,358.70)	R\$ 39,179.51 (US\$ 12,430.05)	R\$ 29,634.98 (US\$ 9,401.96)

<b>(IBGE, 2013)</b>					
<b>Human Development Index for 2010 (IBGE, 2010)</b>	0,847 - high	0,755 - high	0,795 - high	0,806 – high	0,778 - high
<b>Case</b>	An indefinite (or vague) strategy led by the local Social Observatory since 2009, including access to information and contracting	Confrontational and collaborative strategy led by the local Social Observatory since 2009, including contracting and access to information	Mainly collaborative, sometimes confrontational, strategy led by the local Social Observatory since 2009, including contracting and access to information	Collaborative strategy led by the Local Government since 2013, including access to information, open contracting, service delivery	Collaborative strategy led by multi stakeholder platforms since 2009, including access to information, open contracting, service delivery
<b>Type of Engagement (Bridge)</b>	<b>Detached (Pier)</b>	<b>Restrictive (Movable Bridge)</b>	<b>Targeted (Step Stone Bridge)</b>	<b>Targeted (Step Stone Bridge)</b>	<b>Inclusive (Cable Stayed Bridge)</b>

The Brazilian experience suggests that:

- The implementation of open government and social accountability strategies – the actions rather than the plans or the structures - serve as bridges between components of the state (organizations) and elements of the societies (organizations and citizens/users) to which they belong.
- The diverse local political contexts in which action happens shapes and, over time, can be shaped by their organizational structures and strategies.
- The manner these aspects affects and are affected by the organizational structures and strategies of pro-openness / accountability stakeholders, although challenging to track, are visible in the trajectory of each city.
- The quantity and quality of elements within the state and society that these reformers engage and the ways in which they do so influence, and are influenced by their strategies, contexts and organizational structures. In some situations, the combination of these external and internal elements sets up a deeply challenging set of circumstances for the open government and collaborative social accountability activities, in general, and co-production, in particular. In other situations, organizational structures, strategies and context are better aligned improving the likelihood that reformers’ collaborative engagement will deliver on their promise.
- The results achieved by collaboration do not mean that disagreement and conflict is not present and is not valuable. In a contextualized form of control, co-produced by all those involved, articulating different capacities and generating collective learning, citizens do not lose their own critical attitude and their ability to demand solutions and accountability. Citizens can also contribute to these solutions (Schommer and Guerzovich, 2016).

The variations of these elements from one experience to another make possible the proposition of the typology. The discussion of the features of engagement in five cases illuminates how alternative types are also useful to understand the potential mechanisms that different organizations (or actors) have to navigate the challenges to turn state-society open government and social accountability strategies into improved governance and service delivery results.

#### **A. Detached city level social and political action**

The first type of city level engagement, illustrated by efforts to open contracts in the city of Florianopolis, reflects the **detachment** of state and society organizations and their strategy from their political context. The experience of the Social Observatory of Florianopolis (OSF, for its Portuguese acronym) between 2009 and 2015 fits in this type because, although citizens managed to partner with local officials and recruit a one-off large amount of public financial resources, the effort lacked multiple sources of diverse resources, partnerships, and actions that would suggest engagement with the local political context.

In 2009, a group of public servants and academics in the city were inspired by social accountability initiatives in the cities of Maringá and Itajaí to control and open public contracting in the local government. They worked together to import the organizational and strategic model developed in the first city and then disseminated by the national organization Social Observatory of Brazil (OSB) across the country. The OSB's best practice methodology included a series of precise steps to organize social observatories, partner and mobilize resources in society with a focus on business association and private funding, monitor tenders, promote fiscal education and communicate results. The one-size-fits-all model sought to ensure certain performance standards among social observatories as well as mitigate any reputational risks to the social observatories' across the country from the activities in a particular city.

Unlike many of its partners, the OSF received a windfall of financial support from a public fund for civil society organizations, rather than the private sector. For instance, the observatory's leaders, mainly public servants acting as volunteers in a new CSO, tried to connect the OSF with businesses associations, the media, universities, other CSO's in the city, and oversight institutions. However, links with local business associations and traditional CSOs in the city remained weak. The observatory did not need to provide a compelling enough case to ensure professional and business associations teamed up with the observatory, providing financial and non-financial resources to the endeavor. The need for compromise was perceived as less urgent than elsewhere.

In turn, the observatory was not compelled to lever those resources to adjust its approach to the local context by improving the best practice from outside through new combinations of tactics. The tactics applied by the OSF remained limited. The main way in which the observatory thought to build its legitimacy was to conduct the monitoring work exactly as recommended by the standard methodology of the OSB, trying to prove that the work of the social observatory could save public money. The work had to be "technically perfect" and "very carefully politically." The approach was more similar to the traditional bureaucratic tradition than to new forms of state-society policy-making and control of corruption. The observatory showed limited will to understand and work with the context, and weak political capacity to build coalitions and bridges. There was no room for co-production. The few results obtained in monitoring procurement and trying to have access to information were timidly communicated. Politics did not inform actions. The relationship with the local government was wavering and the media and social networks were not used to link to and mobilize others.

In 2012, the OSF was invited to participate of another initiative in the city (Floripa Te Quero Bem), a multistakeholder coalition aimed to improve accountability, citizenship and democratic governance (Dahmer, 2013). But the OSF decision was to continue focusing on monitoring procurement, only engaging

in broader processes marginally. The observatory prioritized superimposing an accurate external model to the local context, rather than embedding and adjusting it so that it could better fit the context and potentially transform it. In so far as the leadership resisted to learn and change from the benchmark, it limited its ability to sustain the support of partners and volunteers and, in turn, to attain results.

Beyond Florianopolis, research suggests that there may be a large proportion of citizen-led open contracting efforts going this route in Brazilian cities (Guerzovich and Schommer, 2016). This category possibly includes newer open contracting effort, and more generally open government and social accountability initiatives that import standard strategies from outside. This category may also include reformers working in an ultra-restrictive local political environment and/or that make strategic decisions that reinforce one or many of these characteristics. This means that openness strategies face contextual barriers that limit their effectiveness.

For instance, when the Social Observatory of Niteroi (OSN), in the Southeast state of Rio de Janeiro, tried to implement the open contracting strategies developed by their counterparts in other Brazilian cities, they found that the formal best practice fitted a lot less in their political context. In 2008, the leadership of the Chamber of Leading Shopkeepers (CDL for its Portuguese acronym) in Niteroi imported the organizational strategy to establish a social observatory to open up local contracts<sup>x</sup>. The initiative was led and hosted by the business association. Months later, the political context changed: a new mayor allegedly pressured the CDL to abandon the OSN. In turn, the CDL ceased to host the Observatory and pressured businesspeople to choose between the OSN and the CDL. If the original design of the open contracting strategy was restricted to this small, but powerful group of local stakeholders and the resources they could mobilize, this shock undermined the potential of the observatory. Organizationally, the observatory lost the resources to implement the strategy as well as limited the number of local stakeholders that have been engaged in the activities of the OSN since then, despite on-going efforts to mobilize other local partners from universities to trade unions and religious organizations.

These twin changes in context and organization also undermined the promise of locally-driven change. The quick end of the local partnership frustrated expectations, demobilized local stakeholders and threatened a more gradual, multi-stakeholder process (on expectations more generally, Guerzovich 2010, Levy, 2014). In turn, they forced to change the strategy. A thinner base of political support can make it difficult to fulfill the observatory's mission. In order to sustain OSN's few loyal members, its leadership built external bridges. State and society actors, organizations, and institutions from across Brazil provided encouragement, partners, agendas, legitimacy and other, albeit limited, resources to survive and act with a locally relevant strategy. According to Souza de Magalhaes (2013), this strategy's main goal would be the strengthening of the local civil society as a whole, through joint action, so that together civil society groups have a chance at withstanding a political process that is dominated by patrimonialism and repression of anticorruption initiatives.

Their counterparts in Santo Antonio de Jesus, in the Brazilian state of Bahia, also prioritized the implementation of an externally designed strategy and faced similar challenges<sup>xi</sup>. In these two cities, citizen-led initiatives also devoted their limited resources to mimicking organizational forms, that in theory, could help implement the standard strategy including strong ties with an external standardizing body – which provided legitimacy and funding, among other resources<sup>xii</sup>. These organizations did not develop structures to build bridges with local partners and resources to help them identify contextually functional strategies. For instance, the number and diversity of local volunteers in both cases is low as are other forms of local resource mobilization. Santo Antonio de Jesus – 7 regular and 5 occasional volunteers; 02 paid staff; monthly budget – R\$ 2 to 5 thousand, much coming from the SOB. Niterói – 2 regular and 3 occasional volunteers; no paid staff; monthly budget – less than R\$ 2 thousand). These organizations did

not reconcile organizational structures and resources nor strategies to their context so they could better engage with others in the state or local society to try, learn, and adapt solutions and navigate complex political dynamics entailed in open government efforts.

Organizational forms, coupled with imported strategies, and difficult contexts were not conducive to nurture state-society collaboration for the co-creation, implementation, or control of concrete policies or programs. These forms of state-society engagement attempted to build a bridge, but managed to build a pier.

Ultimately, these set ups have undermined the ability of these open government efforts to deliver results. In fact, it is hard to find in Florianopolis, Niteroi, or Santo Antonio de Jesus the kinds of open contracting policy and governance wins that are seen in other kinds of local experiences shown below.

## **B. Restricted city level engagement**

**The second type** of organization-strategy-context fit, **restricted**, strives to associate State and society amidst a large number of obstacles. Some of the strategic obstacles observatories face are structural, but others result from strategic decisions and their consequences (i.e. they are self-made). Take the case of the Social Observatory of Rondonópolis (OSR). Founded in 2009 by a group of business leaders and people from the city's traditional elite, it had the incentive of the Social Observatory of Brazil (OSB), to promote opening of public procurement in a local socio-political context unfavorable for this (this section builds on Guerzovich and Dahmer, 2016, and Guerzovich and Schommer, 2016). The founders were concerned about public spending, mainly because it was frequent to have unfinished infrastructure projects, and others that took years to be completed. These factors were perceived as damaging for the business environment and the economic development.

The experience of the OSR initially built on an organization that was set up and driven by a small group of elite organizations. These groups were not focused on mobilizing other segments of society – by design the OSR limited quantity and quality of bridges linking its strategy to other segments of the state and society (organization). The strategy was sustained by the resources mobilized towards advancing the public interest mission, but was also widely perceived to advance private interests. Conversely, observatories did not tap into existing incentives of public sector institutions with influence and power to respond in a positive direction to their open government and control efforts. Quite the contrary, the strategy was focused on few technical tactics recommended by external advisors. Even when staff may have realized that the models were not always well developed or did not work well in their context, they made efforts to apply them. At times, this national guidance was helpful to trigger thinking and adaptation, but other times it became counterproductive, a dead weight from above that not only reinforced but also undermined this Observatory's weaknesses.

The political context – a Mayor that had an agenda opposed by the traditional elite<sup>xiii</sup> – reinforced the limited capillarity of the collaborative open contracting strategy. The OSR coupled efforts to monitor contracts with a confrontational strategy vis-à-vis those who had the capacity to tackle problems in the contracting process, including public officials that may have shared interests and/or mandates to open up the system. This in turn reinforced a widespread perception that the Observatory's mission was to promote private interests and to control Mayors that did not cater to those interests, burning bridges between the observatory and important segments of the state and society.

For many years, strategy and organizational strength did not turn into positive outcomes. This confrontational approach undermined the observatory's tactical and organizational choices. The OSR required public information to monitor the contracting process and, critical, to find solutions to problems. The OSR did not get very far. Its confrontational (“my way or the highway”) attitude did not trigger

answers, but led to mistrust, tension and inaction. This political struggle also harmed the OSR's legitimacy outside the state and hindered its efforts to mobilize local organizations and their capacities. Reliance on external inputs was on-going which could have turned the OSR into a case of detachment. By 2011, there were doubts among the OSR managers about the continuity of the project as Board members walked away. If the context created obstacles for the Observatory's strategy, the OSR's approach helped to make it even more restricted.

However, since 2012, the OSR has gotten a new chance to survive and reboot its approach. Change started with organizational decisions: hiring a new coordinator who took time to diagnose the situation and tried to reflect on the past to correct the course and establishing limits to its relationship with the business associations that undermined the openness strategy's legitimacy. The observatory started to spend a large proportion of its budget to rent an office for itself in the hope to regain its autonomy (real and perceived).

Through this reflection process, the OSR tried, learned, developed new capacities, and pivoted towards a new strategy that relied on collaboration with state and national level Supreme Audit Institutions (Tribunal of Accounts of the State of Mato Grosso and the Union's General Comptrollers) and gradually with local civil servants and society. Collectively, these stakeholders have been learning to trust each other and identifying ways in which to link open government processes to their political strategies, organizational needs, and other pre-existing contextual conditions. Critically, concrete staff in the OSR and its partner Supreme Audit Institutions had the mandate, incentives and time to co-produce, bearing the transaction costs of coordination, which often undermine collective action.

These processes are the bases on which they can create a tailored multipronged strategy to contribute to solving policy and governance problems together. One of the pillars of this new strategy and a way in which the OSR and the Supreme Audit Institutions are learning to co-produce openness and accountability are joint efforts to ensure the implementation at the local level of the Federal Access to Information Law of 2012, among other preconditions for increasing the chances of opening up contracts effectively. These Supreme Audit institutions, as well as the State prosecutors' offices, have technical capacities and oversight over the Municipality's implementation of the statute, but on their own they could not tackle the systemic challenged posed by the ineffective implementation of the access to information law<sup>xiv</sup>.

Still, these state bodies know how it is critical to inform of the OSR's efforts, including researching alternative courses of action, seeking partners, evaluating alternative diagnostics of statute's implementation, applying diagnosis tools, channeling the information to lever state mechanisms that can propose solutions to the problem and hold City Hall accountable. Beyond working on formal aspects of access to information, the partners started to informally claim rights in specific procurement processes to establish a closer conversation and develop a culture of active transparency. The Observatory hopes to present to state and federal bodies that have the mandate to ensure implementation of the law, a detailed diagnostic of the implementation of the access to information statute in relation to the information the OSR requires. This new constructive engagement approach was tested with staff. It paid off to access specific information. The Observatory also learned that staff work in an imperfect system and are more willing to make realistic recommendations, rather that push for ideal overhauls.

More recently, the OSR's strategy seems to be leveraging its collaborative trajectory, by experimenting with monitoring of priority contracts by mobilizing a broader range of state and societal capacities. For opening infrastructure contracts, the reformers are trying to partner with universities that can bring in new capacities available locally to strengthen collective problem-solving. By 2015, nonetheless, the observatory had an Administrative Board (1 President, 4 Vice-Presidents), Audit Committee (1 member), Executive Secretariat (1 Executive Coordinator, 1 secretary, 2 interns), Press Office and volunteers and a US\$ 2,018 monthly budget.

This new cycle of open government and social accountability learning in Rondonópolis suggests that engagement approaches are not born and fixed into a category in the typology, but strategic learning and action have a key role to play in how engagement unfolds. Still, one of the great challenges faced by reformers in this city to achieve results are the difficulties they still face pivoting the strategy, and in turn, adjusting the organizational anchor to reflect learnings. In fact, recently the coordinator of the effort who led the change left the OSR. Reversals cannot be ruled out. The bridge between state and civil society is movable: it opens to let ships go by, then closes to connect both sides.

### C. Targeted city level engagement

**The third group** includes the cities of Itajaí and Blumenau where open government and social accountability strategies link State and society gradually, but in a targeted way.

In Itajaí, as in other cities, a social observatory was launched by a group of leaders of diverse traditional local business associations and unions and retired public officials inspired by a dissemination processes across Brazil in 2009<sup>xv</sup>. Unlike the previous cases, Itajaí's leadership adapted the standard practice to its context. At the launch of the initiative, the city was in a state of calamity caused by major flooding. The state could bypass standard processes and the elites were concerned about irregularities in the reconstruction process (large funds available; no regular control mechanisms). Standard social accountability tactics copied from outside town could not have worked.

Once the state of emergency had passed, the observatory's leadership could build on a pathway of experimentation it had chartered for itself. By 2013, the Social Observatory of Itajaí (OSI, for its Portuguese acronym) developed and tested a new strategy of engagement with the political group in City Hall, although initially the observatory only managed to collaborate with few public officials and had had difficulty to access information from the city government. The OSI used formal and informal mechanisms to get it. After many difficulties and formal denials from City Hall, the OSI set up a meeting between its complete board and the Mayor. The OSI presented itself as the Mayor's ally. The conversation paved the way to have access to certain information. A critical juncture, however, was the enforcement of the National Information Action Statute (LAI) in 2012. Since then, the answers to OSI's requests are faster and more frequent.

Critical to this success is the development of a win-win relationship with the Prosecutor's office that have the mandate and ability to respond to societal demands. According to the OSI: "Our role is social oversight. The Prosecutor Office's role is institutional, constitutional. They have to fulfill that role and we can help them do so. In reality, we help them because they help us." (Schommer et. al, 2015). The complementary roles, expertise, and work between the OSI and the Prosecutor's Office led to a co-production relationship, which was instrumental to increase the observatory's results and credibility vis-à-vis public administration. According to one interview, "almost nobody in the government longer ignore the requests of the Observatory, because they know if they do not answer, in a few days they receive a request from the Prosecutors' Office." The partnership also increased civil society's capacity to implement social accountability efforts and, ultimately, improve results, including the implementation of the access to information legislation.

The city's level of implementation of the access to information law and best practices is relatively very good, the National Strategy to Fight Corruption and Money Laundering (ENCCLA). 9.10 out of 10 possible points. The access to information challenge is conceptualized and tackled in Itajaí as a problem to be solved on a case by case basis, rather than systemically as in Rondonópolis. It is solved by triggering the prosecutor's office once and changing the attitude of many important officials – if needed, the Observatory can solve other individual cases thanks to the precedent or new legal actions.

This process and others have informed the OSI's learning about potential pay-off of acting to tend more bridges to different segments of state and society and also specializing and building islands of new forms of governance and service delivery moving forward. The OSI combines a standardized approach to monitor bids with specific strategies developed to deal with certain challenges - for example, to define the new waste disposal fee in the city, as a member of a committee with multiple stakeholders.

Citizen-led engagement strategies have been discussed. Indeed, in cases in which the core of the action is the interaction of segments of the state and civil society, the line is blurry and the initiative can emerge from stakeholders working in the short or long term in the state. The case of the Transparent Administration Project in the city of Blumenau captures this state-led gradual, targeted dynamic.

In 2011, Napoleão Bernardes – a dark horse – became mayor of Blumenau. His campaign included a series of political commitments associated to the open government agenda, including the need to align local law and practice to the Access to Information Law, as well the empowerment of citizens, to hold the government accountable as a way to improve public administration and its efficiency. However, the implementation of transparency commitments was not a priority of the new administration in its first year. It was one of many projects, but gradually it gained momentum and became a structured program<sup>xvi</sup>, with publicized goals and deadlines (Guerzovich and Schommer, 2015).

Fast-forward four years and the program has become a “brand” for the re-election campaign, a source of savings and improvement of public service delivery through the implementation of innovative open solutions that could deliver tangible results on particular aspects of the agenda. These include setting up reforms using transparency and technology to end clientelistic allocation of services (e.g. placement in kindergarten, surgeries and street paving), improving transparency and accountability of procurement systems, and establishing instances of collaboration with civil society groups.

The basis of this transformation has been gradual organizational development and an incremental strategy that has prioritized building bridges with select state and society groups – including the Social Observatory of Blumenau, business associations and the professional association of lawyers - that provided social, technical and political capital for inside reformers. Some society organizations started as informal allies – demanding and evaluating reforms but also mobilizing political support for it – and overtime are contributing to the co-production of the Project's agenda through formal seats in the newly formed multi-stakeholder Municipal Transparency Council.

These elite stakeholders and tactics targeted to their interest where prioritized over building a broad based social coalition as the one needed to win reelection partly to mitigate the risks of overpromising on this set of policies. The risks where perceived to be acute because openness is potentially hard to deliver due to the challenges it poses to traditional/clientelistic politics and, therefore, the resistance from powerful stakeholders who may bear the costs. Another risk factored into the definition of a targeted as opposed to an inclusive approach is associated to the technocratic conceptualization of the open government agenda, which by design seemed challenging to communicate to the population in ways that contribute to deliver votes.

Internally, a key component of this approach has been the establishment of an interdisciplinary team of professionals in the administration that had academic knowledge about open government experiences in other cities. This team defined the scope of the project, which initially included only 16 goals to be delivered by the end of the administration's term, prioritized considering, among other variables, in which areas they had a better chance of building effective transparency islands.

This group, informally first and formally later, convened political and career officials from six government departments in charge of prioritizing and executing concrete project's goals. These stakeholders were also

able to feed into the agenda so that changes met their needs, priorities and capacities. This approach to build bridges inside the municipal government to sectoral areas helped overcome opposition to openness within the government and, in turn, eased the way to the implementation of reforms. For some officials, such as school principals, the very implementation process has perhaps become the most effective targeted approach to turn select officials into supporters of the process. However, by no means has the strategy convinced all civil servants or politicians – many of who remain critical and skeptical of the value of openness due to shortcomings and/or other policy priorities.

As goals were quickly delivered, risk aversion among transparency reformers diminished, and lessons were learned. The number and ambition of internal and external partners' demands and goals grew to a total of 48 goals to be delivered by the end of 2016. The team also built bridges with select civil servants in target areas, specific providers, journalists and groups in civil society. Among them is the formalization of the decision-making bodies, which increase the feedback channels from diverse stakeholders, improve communication and spaces for co-production of control. Multiple stakeholders learned to navigate the politics of open government and manage its risks over time.

While this brief summary may suggest a linear incremental process, openness was gradual but not linear.

The state society bridge looks like a step-stone bridge. It is malleable, can be built as stakeholders go, depending on specific objectives and may lead in more than one direction. Each goal and measure require navigating sector-specific challenges and taking advantage of specific opportunities. For instance, the establishment of a transparent, electronic line to allocate surgeries without the interference of politicians required, among other steps, getting the multi-stakeholder health council and other stakeholders on board. A similar line to allocate spaces in public kindergartens required navigating litigation processes through which judges and prosecutors accepted or challenged the system. In determining the order in which streets would be paved faced the resistance of at least some politicians and campaign donors who previously could use their power to gain advantages over others.

From the standpoint of the reformers, trial, learning and adaptation shaped and was shaped by the political context and incentives to implement reforms that support open government and social accountability. Still, the targeted organizational and strategic development today highlight the challenge posed by the electoral process which requires a broader coalition of support to facilitate the resilience and expansion of the islands of change beyond a particular local administration.

#### **D. Inclusive city level engagement**

The **final group of local engagements**– called **inclusive** – is one that weaves together context-relevant state and society politics for open government and social accountability through strategies and organizational structures. The case of Londrina, where the development and action of the Observatory of Public Management of Londrina (OGPL, for its Portuguese acronym) needs to be understood along with the bridges gradually built and/or strengthened by the business-led effort to establish a Forum to Develop the city<sup>xvii</sup> and the multistakeholder City Council of Transparency and Social Control.

Londrina is a city marked by the stigma of corruption. Over a decade ago, this challenge encouraged different elites in the city to advance a series of initiatives to change the course of history. They included efforts to develop and implement a development strategy as well as transparency and state and society accountability initiatives. Over the years, these efforts, which started as targeted efforts, became more inclusive of diverse segments of the local society. Pro-openness stakeholders now implement tailored tactics to lever diverse capacities and relationships in society to prepare monitoring plans, tailored to different sectorial contexts and types of services.

For instance, the contract to purchase school meals was allegedly affected by inefficiencies and corruption. The OGPL, building on its experience, opted to target many but not all stakeholders in the complex overlap of sectoral, contracting, and accountability systems. It's politically and technically informed approach engaged the Department of Education, responsible for the design of the terms of reference for bidding, and for monitoring the implementation of contracts; some of the school principals responsible for monitoring contract implementation in 115 schools in the city. To do this, the Observatory had to develop capillarity across the city beyond the original elite focus to be able to gather information at the school level and, then, take it up the policy making decision chain.

The OGPL hoped to use a constructive engagement strategy with these stakeholders and benefit from their capacities. However, relationships were initially confrontational. They evolved gradually and unevenly as the OGPL engaged different sector's stakeholders over time with target tactics such as training and monitoring, depending on the counterpart. The work of the OGPL was valued by some principals, who saw it as an ally in the relationship with suppliers. The co-production is therefore visible in the design of the contracts of school lunch provision (by private companies), and mainly in implementation/delivering of the school lunches. The OGPL staff and volunteers cooperate actively and regularly with Department of Education officials and the principals in many schools to monitor and improve the service delivery, eventually involving the private providers. Learning by the mutual engagement in implementation is also valuable to improve the contracts in future bids.

The service of landscaping and urban maintenance, under the responsibility of the City Company for Traffic and Urbanization of Londrina (CMTU) is another example of co-production. After irregularities in large bids, a history of poor contract implementation and pressure from civil society and oversight agencies, a new mayor empowered new CMTU staff to revise the whole structure and processes at the Company. The staff acknowledged that they did not have all the skills to redesign the processes and contracts, they invited the OGPL, other CSOs and public agencies to collaborate with them on to solve problems. The Observatory worked together with public officials in designing and monitoring public contracting and in so doing developed new capacities for joint action.

For the OGPL, this also means that the organization's structure has evolved through cycles of trial, reflection, and adaptation along with the change in strategy. For instance, the organization has now a more diverse board and group of volunteers than ever before - 25 regularly and 60 occasionally. It is accountable to a broad group of constituents and partners, too. However, it has only started a pathway towards inclusion of a more diverse group than originally founded the OGPL, recently. And direct engagement and empowerment of underrepresented populations in the city is not yet a reality. There is a question mark, however, as to what is the adequate equilibrium between further expanding engagement and promoting effective engagement with limited resources – its monthly budget is R\$ 7,500 (US\$ 2,162) - with competing priorities.

Even so, this is one example of developing civic capacities that grew from practice and strategy of pro-openness elites. **These elite based dynamics also delivered concrete results such as** the *Compra Londrina Program*<sup>xviii</sup> that aims to encourage and permanently empower local businesses to participate in public procurement bids or a government transparency program with similarities to the one described in Blumenau.

To be sure, these groups did not try to achieve wholesale change at once, but focused on apparently modest gains, achievable and politically relevant at particular junctures in the cities' context. Persistence over time and bridges across these different initiatives started more structural change. These groups slowly developed the willingness and ability to participate in multistakeholder spaces, act together with others to solve public problems in ways that can help bolster individual organizations' political and

technical capacities. Collectively, they were able to lead on issues that benefited the group even if individual members would lose from their implementation, including open government policies. Their contextualized, realistic strategies to contribute to solving policy problems and, in due course, transforming the very context. These stakeholders may be on the way towards building a cable-stayed bridge that is sustained by multiple stakeholders (or cables). These stakeholders are committed, engaged and can help put together a sophisticated piece of infrastructure: a long bridge that can curve to work with the grain and fit its environment.

## **V. Conclusion**

This paper explored different ways by which state and civil society organizations interact and engage with their contexts through collaborative social accountability and open government interventions.

The starting point was the theoretical literature and reports of experiences being conducted around the world, emphasizing collaboration and constructive engagement rather than confrontation strategies to achieve results in social accountability and open government initiatives. The review uncovered a gap in the literature, which is to understand the conditions under which different forms of state-society collaboration unfold and work on the ground. Furthermore, while it was understood that context, organization and strategy matter for the effectiveness of collaborative social accountability and open government efforts, including the role of co-production of public services and control, the literature is often criticized for its inability to move beyond macro-level, abstract analysis. This paper builds on insights from the literature about open government, collaborative social accountability and co-production, and links it to practice.

Four types of collaborative engagement were identified - inclusive, targeted, restrictive and detached - as a result of a theoretical-empirical exercise that focused on the interaction between context, strategy and organization as three interrelated variables that jointly have greater potential to account for results than each one of them separately. To operationalize the variables, the paper identifies four key dimensions in the literature and practices of social accountability, open governance, and co-production of public services and control. These are: (i) capacities of the partnership; (ii) fit with the context; (iii) complexity of strategy; (iv) adaptability for learning. In each type, the following are identified: the stakeholders (who acts); the relationship with the contexts (how is the action); the lines of strategic action (what are the actions); and the dynamics over time (when is the action). The concept of co-production of control was a means to explore how the collaboration between state and civil society work (when it happens) – what are the roles and responsibilities of each part, the skills and other resources invested, the results effectively co-produced.

The paper then illustrated and explored the potential of the typology analyzing the cases of five Brazilian cities where civil society organization (social observatories) and government work together, in different ways and at different levels of cooperation, to reduce corruption and to improve the quality of public services and public administration.

The Brazilian experience suggests that, in the implementation of collaborative open government and social accountability strategies, the actions (as opposed to static plans or structures) serve as bridges between components of the state and elements of the societies to which they belong. Different types of bridges can help make inroads in understanding the potential and limits of state-society engagement to tackle public policy and governance problems.

The diversity of local political contexts in which action happens shapes and, over time, can be shaped by organizational structures and strategies that make up different forms of engagement. The engagement approaches in each city are not born and fixed into a type. Yet, progress is neither automatic nor

guaranteed, strategies can revert in less promising directions<sup>xix</sup>. Change may be circumscribed to certain islands in a particular city that is a sea of opacity. Strategic learning can play an important role in helping reformers shift course in a positive direction. In fact, what makes state-society collaboration work suggests context, strategy and organization fit after cycles of joint experimentation and learning, rather than as one-off instances of engagement.

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<sup>i</sup> For arguments in favor of using sub-national comparative methods in the study of transparency and accountability interventions see <http://transparencyinitiative.theideabureau.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Think-Piece.-Learning-across-localities.pdf>. On this methodology see Snyder 2001 and <http://www.ssrc.org/publications/view/A116DE05-8659-E111-B2A8-001CC477EC84/>.

<sup>ii</sup> This section builds on findings from Guertzovich & Schommer (2016, forthcoming). Also see Schommer et al, 2015; Schommer & Guertzovich, 2016.

<sup>iii</sup> According to Olson (1965), a collective action problem is a situation in which there are multiple individuals who would benefit from a certain action, but the fact that costs or benefits are shared across individuals makes it unlikely that any one individual can or will undertake it on their own.

<sup>iv</sup> A GPSA grantee comments about the challenge in the country: “[GPSA] projects will require us to challenge and overcome some deeply rooted dynamics, assumptions and behaviors in our countries. .... While striving to empower the poor, the focus should not only be on them, but also on finding ways to ignite the interests of all stakeholders, especially the decision makers, to take the voices of citizens seriously, despite their prevalent

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reluctance to accept changes. We, as GPSA grantees, should therefore contribute to building and enabling an environment for constructive engagement between the government, service providers, civil society organizations and the community at large. And this is how the ‘magic’ will happen!” (Aliberdieva et al. 2015).

<sup>v</sup> For a systematic analysis of project proposals see GPSA Note Series, Note 3, Guerzovich & Poli (2014e).

<sup>vi</sup> Note: The case for thinking and working politically: the implications of ‘doing development differently’. Available at: <http://publications.dlprog.org/TWP.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> More recently, some of this literature has also underscored that organizational factors that may help or hinder adaptation and political thinking, but this is an area that deserves further analysis (Dasandi, Marquette & Robinson, 2016).

<sup>viii</sup> This type builds on the work of Fung, Graham and Weil (2007), Baena Olave and Vyeira (2011) on targeted disclosure, Fung, Russon Gilman and Shkabetu (2011) on technology interventions, Guerzovich (2010; 2011) on gradual anticorruption change, Levy (2014) on governance and development, and Guerzovich & Schommer (2016); Schommer, Dahmer & Spaniol (2014); Loureiro et al (2012); Taylor (2010), on gradual democratic development in Brazil.

<sup>ix</sup> On this methodological issue see Przeworski and Teune (1970) and Locke and Thelen (1995).

<sup>x</sup> The analysis of the case of Niteroi is based on Souza de Magalhaes (2013) as well as interviews with the author.

<sup>xi</sup> It is important to note that this analysis considers the trajectory of the initiative since 2011, even if more recently the effort may be transitioning to a restrictive one. Phone Interview with Pamela Moura da Rocha, Coordinator of the Social Observatory of Santo Antônio de Jesus, May 8, 2015

<sup>xii</sup> See DiMaggio and Powell (1983) on the phenomenon of copy-pasting organizational forms across countries even if they are ineffective. Also see Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock (2012); Levy (2014), cf. Krause (2013)

<sup>xiii</sup> On the *Do Pátio administration* see e.g. <http://www.tribunamt.com.br/2008/12/jose-carlos-do-patio-%E2%80%9Cseu-jeito-populista-chega-a-lembrar-o-ex-presidente-janio-da-silva-quadros%E2%80%9D/>

<sup>xiv</sup> ENCCLA gave the city only 3.90 points out of 10, a bad performance compared to the state of Mato Grosso’s score (9.50) or the state’s capital Cuiabá (8.50).

<sup>xv</sup> For more on Itajaí, see Schommer & Dahmer, to be published; Schommer & Guerzovich, to be published.

<sup>xvi</sup> For details about the Program of Transparency of the City Hall of Blumenau, see:

<http://www.blumenau.sc.gov.br/transparencia/transparencia.aspx>; [https://prezi.com/ntgii3jdcqr/\\_gestao-transparente/](https://prezi.com/ntgii3jdcqr/_gestao-transparente/)

<sup>xvii</sup> To find out more about the forum *Desenvolve Londrina*, access <http://www.forumdesenvolvedondrina.org/>

<sup>xviii</sup> For further information about the Compra Londrina Program please access: <http://www.acil.com.br/compra-londrina>. On the economic arguments to engage small and medium business in public procurement see OECD (2013).

<sup>xix</sup> For the original statement of within state islands of improved governance in territorial seas of opacity, see O'Donnel (1993). For an example of development of sectoral islands see Helfer, Alter, and Guerzovich (2009).