

Intersections between collaborative governance and communicative action: an analytical proposal

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The New Public Management failed to present significant changes in the patterns of relations between the centralizing state and society. This research proposes an analytical approach based on the interactions between collaborative governance (CG) and communicative action theory (CAT), in order to study communicative collaboration (CC) practices involving the state and society. When looking for intersections among the theoretical assumptions in CG and CAT, the study identified four theoretical constructs that contribute to a collaborative scenario: multiplicity of actors, interdependence, inclusive deliberative process, and seeking consensus. The findings based on cutting-edge CG theory and on Habermas' classic works demonstrate that CC assumptions enable environments conducive to inclusive social participation. The article argues that it is possible to build spaces conducive to communicative collaboration between the state and society, where there is equal participation among actors seeking shared understanding leading to practical solutions to public problems.

Keywords: democracy; state-society relationships; communicative collaboration.

Aproximações entre governança colaborativa e ação comunicativa: uma proposta analítica de estudo

Pode-se dizer que os esforços do gerencialismo não conseguiram apresentar grandes mudanças nos padrões das relações entre Estado centralizador e sociedade. Com isso em vista, o objetivo desta pesquisa foi propor uma abordagem analítica, a partir das aproximações entre governança colaborativa (GC) e teoria da ação comunicativa (TAC), para investigar práticas de colaboração comunicativa (CC) entre Estado e sociedade. Na busca pelas intersecções entre os pressupostos teóricos da GC e da TAC, identificaram-se quatro constructos teóricos para um cenário colaborativo: a) multiplicidade de atores; b) interdependência; c) processo deliberativo inclusivo; e d) busca pelo consenso. Os achados do estado da arte da GC e das obras clássicas habermasianas demonstraram que os pressupostos de uma CC viabilizam ambientes propícios a uma participação social inclusiva. Discute-se que é possível construir espaços propícios a uma CC entre Estado e sociedade, onde haja igualdade de participação entre os interessados, na busca por um entendimento compartilhado capaz de apontar soluções práticas para problemas públicos.

Palavras-chave: democracia; relações Estado-sociedade; colaboração comunicativa.

Aproximaciones entre gobernanza colaborativa y acción comunicativa: una propuesta analítica de estudio


Los esfuerzos del gerencialismo no pudieron presentar grandes cambios en los patrones de las relaciones entre Estado centralizador y sociedad. El objetivo de esta investigación es proponer un enfoque analítico, a partir de las aproximaciones entre la gobernanza colaborativa (GC) y la teoría de la acción comunicativa (TAC), para la investigación de prácticas de colaboración comunicativa (CC) entre Estado y sociedad. En la búsqueda por las intersecciones de los presupuestos teóricos de la GC y de la TAC, se identificaron cuatro constructos teóricos para un escenario colaborativo: multiplicidad de actores, interdependencia, proceso deliberativo inclusivo y búsqueda del consenso. Los hallazgos de las obras clásicas de Habermasian y de vanguardia de GC demostraron que los supuestos de CC permiten entornos propicios para la participación social inclusiva. Se discute que es posible construir espacios propicios a una CC entre Estado y sociedad, donde haya igualdad de participación entre los interesados, en la búsqueda de un entendimiento compartido capaz de apuntar soluciones prácticas para problemas públicos.

Palabras clave: democracia; relaciones Estado-sociedad; colaboración comunicativa.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Among the various transformations in State-society relations during the past few decades, we can observe the predominance of instrumental rationality for economic ends. The bureaucratic model has suffered criticism for its excessive use of instrumental rationality. However, later movements have been no different. New public management (NPM), incorporated in Brazilian public administration during the 1990s, sought to substitute the excessively hierarchical, sclerotic, bureaucratic model. This inspired a format called managerial public administration, which focused on implanting some characteristics practiced in the private sector in the public sector, such as an increase in efficiency, the search for results and holding public actors responsible for their actions, but the managerial movement did not achieve a large portion of its objectives (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2014; Kissler & Heidemann, 2006; Matias-Pereira, 2010). However, it has been perceived that there is a need for some joint action between the State, civil society and the market in the performance of public management (Kissler & Heidemann, 2006), in the creation of values beyond efficiency and effectiveness, through a collaborative and democratic process (Bryson et al., 2014). However, decision making has remained centralized under State control.

Within this context, the concept of collaborative governance (CG) has been the subject of growing debate in the international literature (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015), even though in Brazil, studies of CG are still incipient (Sant'Anna, Tonelli, & Abbud, 2016; Tonelli, Sant'Anna, Abbud, & Souza, 2018). In this new form of governance, the State does not impose itself on its partner actors, but instead places itself on the same level in a structure consisting of dialogue and the construction of joint decision making (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Electing collaboration as indispensable to governance systems, it is notable that there has been such recent interest in the CG approach in the international literature. The main approaches present the characteristics of a collaborative arrangement (Ansell & Gash, 2008); propose CG an ideal normative model, even though it is not yet a reality (Freeman, 1997); present the conditions necessary for the development of collaborative partnerships (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, & Lounsbury, 2001); analyze networks as governance structures and present the conditions for the construction of collaborative capacity (Sullivan, Barnes, & Matka, 2006; Weber & Khademian, 2008; Weber, Lovrich, & Gaffney, 2007); explore political openness or closure in terms of social movements who seek influence in decision making (Newman, Barnes, Sullivan, & Knops, 2004); and propose elements for a CG regime (Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012).

To Bingham (2010) and Purdy (2012), CG appears as an emergent proposal to substitute traditional approaches of command and control, including public governance, where mere formal participation is prioritized. In CG, the values constructed are much more important as are the exchanges between the parties involved rather than the accounting of activities (Bryson et al., 2015). With an emphasis on a collective decision making process, CG can be understood as an arrangement that involves public as well as private actors in a process of inclusive deliberation, with visions of consensus in searching for solutions to complex public problems (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Robertson & Choi, 2012).

In parallel, Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action (TCA) has often been used to provide a theoretical basis for the construction of public dialogues and participative forms of society. In administration, the search for the contributions of Habermas occurs mainly in studies of social

management, such as Tenório (1998, 2005) and Alcântara and Pereira (2017). Tenório (1998, 2005) defines social management based on the elements of Habermas's communicative action. In the field of organizational studies, Habermas is explored in debates about rationality, the ethics of discourse, language and communicative action, and his affiliation with the Frankfurt School – in this case, Habermas is also criticized for his conceptions of communicative rationality, consensus and modernity (Couto & Carrieri, 2017; Lara & Vizeu, 2017). In general, in public administration, Habermas provides the basis for debates about the public sphere, civil society, participative and deliberative democracy, and the relations between the State, the market and civil society. Abreu (2010, pp. 17-18) states that “Habermas, while a representative of the Frankfurt School, carries a strong amount of critical theory in his elaborations” which is open to the importance of emancipation within the context of public administration.

In the same way that TCA criticizes the hegemony of instrumental rationality, CG positions itself contrary to the traditional model of inadequate governmental structures which are incapable of dealing with public challenges, and are centered on hierarchical, bureaucratic structures which are imprisoned by limited routines and objectives (Innes & Booher, 2010). On the other hand, many times the model which is proposed for greater participation of interested parties is a collaboration that is understood only as the act of gathering together a group of people to cooperate for a specific aim, rather than finding the conditions for a collaborative rationality (Innes & Booher, 2010) that is true, correct and intelligible (Habermas, 2012a). The governance proposal that we seek to present in this article is based on communicative collaboration (CC) which is not to be confused with other types of generic meanings which are attributed to the word *collaboration*. Innes and Booher (2010) warn precisely against this when they explain that often collaboration is used as a bargaining process or cooption. CC proposes to explore various and diverse opinions and take them into consideration in making decisions, that is, to get past the idea of aggregation associated with a vision of the possibilities of public deliberation among various actors (Habermas, 1997).

Thus, this study seeks to answer the following question:

- Based on the limitations of managerialism in public administration, how can one identify communicative collaboration practices (CC) between the State and society?

Within this context, the objective of this article is to propose an analytical approach to examine the convergence between collaborative governance (CG) and the theory of communicative action (TCA), for the investigation of aspects related to communicative collaboration (CC) between the State and society.

Delineating the intersections between these theories can help scholars and public administrators reflect on a type of dialogue among various interested parties in the practical results of these discussions. Another important contribution is that if to Andion (2012) there is still an absence of great changes in the pattern of relations between the State and society, the contribution of this article expressly seeks to introduce new possibilities of dialogue between them. CC is understood in this study as an interactive dialogue between the administrative power (represented by the state system) and the communicative power (that of the world of life), in which deliberative decisions are sought

through rational arguments based on veracity, rectitude and intelligibility in terms of the spoken acts of those involved as they relate to reaching a consensus. Moreover, CC constitutes a preliminary concept posted in the field of debate (the community of academic and practical interpreters) to be developed based on new theoretical and empirical contributions.

Thus, this theoretical essay and exploration of the Brazilian and international literature on this subject presents discussions of CG, the theoretical fundamentals of TCA and their interfaces for the construction of an analytical proposal to study CC.

2. FUNDAMENTALS OF COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

In a world of constant, complex changes with various interests in play, it is not possible to restrict oneself to a centralizing, bureaucratic public administration model. The lack of interest in sharing information with society, the fear of political interference, behavior oriented solely towards economic ends and highly controlled processes has reflected a trend towards the predominance of instrumental rationality (Innes & Booher, 2010). The result is a difficulty in getting public acceptance for decisions (Purdy, 2012; Siddiki, Carboni, Koski, & Sadiq, 2015), the exclusion of minorities (McDougall, Leeuwis, Bhattarai, Maharjan, & Jiggins, 2013) and a lack of meeting demands (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

In seeking to confront these problems, the influence of non-governmental actors in public management has grown and gained space in the literature in the debate about public governance (Bache & Flinders, 2004; Bovaird, 2005). Scholars suggest that public governance can be understood as a change in the traditional hierarchical model towards a system of creating values which are the fruit of mutual social learning and engagement and interaction with interest groups (Kallis, Kiparsky, & Norgaard, 2009; Mah & Hills, 2014; Provan & Kenis, 2008). Despite this theoretical evolution in governance proposals, there has not been a perceived valorization of this learning process, and there has been a lack of creation of the structures and processes needed for collective decision making (Bryson et al., 2015).

Within this context, CG presents itself as a new proposal, where public and private actors work collectively in decision making that is based on deliberative consensus, organized to permit the resolution of complex public problems that cannot be dealt with by the government alone (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Choi & Robertson, 2014a). Therefore, in the public sphere, we can interpret collaboration as the fruit of the interaction between the government and society in seeking public solutions than cannot be executed by a single actor (Brown, Gong, & Jing, 2012).

Thus, one important difference of CG from other public governance models is that it is not merely a consultative process, but a two way street of communication and influence in decision making, in such a manner that the responsibility of achieving the common objective is shared between the public and private sectors (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Weber & Khademian, 2008). It should be noted that this broad participation also implies a mutual taking on of responsibility that goes beyond the division between what is public and private, or in other words, no matter what sector the actor is a part of, the actor should feel responsible for the results (Freeman, 1997).

In the face of the inclusion of so many varying opinions, consensus is clearly signaled as a goal sought by CG. This is because there should be a construction for convincing others that certain decisions are more advantageous than others for the solution of problems, seeking the enlightenment of all the participants who differ in this process (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Robertson & Choi, 2012).

CG requires sharing the power to make decisions (Purdy, 2012) and time. It is important to respect the time necessary to include participants in order to construct the confidence of the members in the long term, because “certainly, the cost of retarding the collaboration process is high, but it may be less than the cost associated with a loss of confidence” (Johnston, Hicks, Nan, & Auer, 2010, p. 715).

In addition, what is essential for this governance proposal is the participation and collaboration in the political process of those who do not belong to the government (Bingham, 2010). Thus, this proposal differs from other governance models, because in it the State is not necessarily the leader or the controller of the decision making processes and the only one responsible for the results. It is desirable that the leadership of the collaborative process be shared between public managers, community leaders, business leaders, partner organizations or any other members who have mediation abilities and transparent communication with all of those involved (Newman et al., 2004; Weber & Khademian, 2008). With this flexibility in leadership, which occurs when the state actor “gets out of the way” (Bryson et al., 2014, p. 448) or when it works as a catalyzer of partnerships, there occurs a true sharing of responsibilities and power as proposed by the CG (McDougall et al. 2013; Weber & Khademian, 2008).

In considering the protagonistic role of the state focused on results, as defended by the managerial public administration proposal, a certain ambiguity may be perceived in terms of who has responsibility, given that public managers are responsible for the results in this case, but cannot manage the political processes that enable them to achieve these results (Bryson et al., 2014; Moynihan, 2006). The multifaceted accountability proposed by CG, on the other hand, provides the participation of multiple actors in political processes. In multifaceted accountability, the State is called on to recognize the values and interests of citizens, who in turn, evaluate and construct public policies exercising their capacity to pressure the government to correct its actions (Bryson et al., 2014; Newman et al., 2004). This multifaceted accountability should be part of a formal accord among the interested parties where there are clear definitions of roles and responsibilities as well as mechanisms for execution and the assigning of responsibility (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Siddiki et al., 2015).

3. THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

There is a growing movement of studies which have faced the issue of the hegemony of instrumental rationality, which has been dominant in public administration for a long time. This instrumental rationale uses the scientific method of cause and effect, with a focus on productivity and immediate interests, devaluing the researcher’s intuition and knowledge (Guerreiro Ramos, 1989). In terms of the hegemony of instrumental rationality, it is important to consider a discussion of the influence of positivism in public administration. For example, Box (2015) argues that the influence of positivism and functionalism have distanced this field from notions of dialectics, criticism and emancipation. The TCA offers a path for this criticism, however it does so without discarding the importance of rational systemic processes (Habermas, 2012a). In other words, Habermas (2012a) indicates that systems theory and its systemic and strategic assumptions should be considered for society’s comprehension. The concept of CC presented here can be operationalized analytically to broaden this discussion beyond the dichotomies and more “pessimistic” criticisms of Box (2015).

To Andion (2012), the paradigm changes have not been sufficient for organizational theory and public administration to break away from the functionalist conception. In public administration, this conception is characterized by the absence of great changes in the patterns of relations between

the State and society. This is because, according to Andion (2012), there remains a high degree of centralization of power in the executive, isolation (and bureaucratic insulation) on the part of public managers, the strong influence of patrimonial patterns and the low power of public policy implementation. Thus, to overcome these barriers Andion (2012) suggests new paradigms, which are not focused on functionalism, to help in the task of reconfiguring the identity of public administration in terms of the scientific field, and bring it up to date with new epistemological assumptions, theories and methodologies.

The focus of Habermas's TCA in relation to dialogue and the intersubjectivity between the subjects of action provides an explanatory base for the deficiencies of traditional administrative theory and offers a base for the construction of emancipatory forms, which counterbalance instrumental rationality, which has also been criticized by Guerreiro Ramos (1989). It should be noted that the intent of TCA is not to negate reason as a form of emancipation, but rather to argue in favor of communicative reason.

This emerges from the contribution of Habermas (2012a) in the proposal of a social theory that indicates the path to human emancipation through reason, through intersubjective relationships between individuals with a focus on communication and the search for shared understanding. Therefore, this understanding "relies on a rationally motivated common accord among the participants, which is measured according to pretensions of critical validity" (Habermas, 2012a, p. 147). It is important to clarify that, to Habermas (2012a), this "rationally motivated" is directly linked to individual exteriorizations which are considered rational when they are considered to be reliable, to the extent that they are based on fundamental ideas and can also be criticized.

In the same sense, in talking about exteriorizations, their pretensions of validity have to be considered. This is because the argument (exteriorization) should seek coherence with the objective reality (propositional truth), should have elements of social reference (normative correction) and should make the subjective interpretation of individuals (veracity) possible (Habermas, 2012a). It is only based on these pretensions that we can come to a linguistic understanding, which is the conductive wire of communicative rationality. In this manner, if to Habermas (2012a, p. 481) the sentence will only be true if speakers and listeners understand its significance, "the semantics of truth lead to the exposition of the thesis that the significance of a sentence is determined by its conditions of truth."

It should be emphasized that the acts of speaking (exteriorizations) are not just representations of language (Habermas, 2012a). If there exist assumptions already detailed in terms of the validity of these acts of speaking, these will only be based on communicative action if they were acts of illocutionary speech – understood to be capable of constructing actions oriented towards understanding, establishing a rationally motivated link between the subjects (Habermas, 2012a). Unlike illocutionary speech, oriented by understanding, perlocutionary acts are those whose action is oriented towards success, directly linked to teleological action (strategic, utilitarian action) and not communicative action. A locutionary act is simply speaking (Habermas, 2012a). Therefore, communicative acting is based on acts of understanding (illocutionary) and not calculations of success (perlocutionary).

Thus, intersubjectivity can only occur through a dialogue oriented process, with a predisposition towards consensus, constructed via spheres of the subjective, objective and social worlds (Habermas, 2012a). Language is only valid if it refers to these three worlds (subjective, objective and social), to the extent that speakers and listeners use the system of reference of these worlds "like an interior frame through which they can stitch together and interpret common definitions relative to the situation

of their action” (Habermas, 2012b, p. 221). We can also consider the world of life that, to Habermas (2012a), is the backdrop of communication, where a reflexive consensus takes place based on feelings shared by participants.

It is through the rational reconstruction of the act of speaking, with the backdrop of the world of life, that Habermas (2012a) seeks to overcome instrumental rationality. The assumptions of speech are the *sine qua non* of communicative action. The four assumptions needed for full communication between individuals is: a) propositional truth (what is being said is true); b) veracity (sincere expression of subjectivity); c) normative correction (adoption of moral principles); and d) intelligibility (understandable discourse) (Ferreira, 2005; Habermas, 2012a).

If in a dialogue an individual is simply a means to achieve a given end, what predominates is instrumental rationality. If, on the other hand, there is a search for mutual understanding based on pretensions of truth, veracity, rectitude and intelligibility, we are dealing with communicative rationality. In the words of Ferreira (2005, p. 14), “it is based on the emancipation potential of communicative competence that one can use to verify the possibility of overcoming the egocentric nature implicit in the rationality intended by strategic action”.

Based on all of this, the relations between the State, the public sphere, society and democracy are conceived of by Habermas (1997) based on the paradigm change proposed by the TCA. In this, the author argues for a procedural model of democracy: deliberative democracy based on the exchange of arguments, communicative reason and the public sphere. To Habermas (1997), the public sphere, like the discursive and communicative sphere, becomes relevant to the formation of public opinion and the influence of the demands of civil society on the decisions of the State. For this reason, his democratic model converges in various points with the relationship between the State and society present in CG studies.

This study positions itself as an analytical approach to the identification of CC practices based on the convergence of CG and TCA, as will be presented below.

4. CONVERGENCE BETWEEN COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

Several theoretical constructs of CG and TCA are based on similar fundamental concepts. These constructs make a collaborative environment possible between public and private actors. In this way, in delineating the main intersections between CG and TCA in the construction of collaboration there are four recurring elements of a collaboration process according to Ansell and Gash (2008), Innes and Booher (2010), Robertson and Choi (2012) and Choi and Robertson (2014a). There exists convergence between CG and TCA in each of these elements.

4.1 Multiplicity of Actors

There is a broad debate in the literature about how the State should act in dealing with public problems. One of these streams of thought argues for state leadership as an instrument of social and economic progress (Bielschowsky, 2012; Furtado, 2000). On the other hand, when talking about CG and new designs for public policies, the main element indicated in the literature is the union between various public and private actors, who possess a variety of resources and information shared during collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012; Howlett, 2014; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015;

Mah & Hills, 2014; Siddiki et al., 2015; Sullivan et al., 2006). This multiplicity of actors enriches the decision making process and the possibilities of acting within a collaborative network (Choi & Robertson 2014a; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001). In addition, the presence of multiple actors increases the legitimacy of the collaborative process, since the union of various viewpoints and knowledge can provide opportunities for solutions and rules of better quality, the construction of instruments to present accounting books and a better understanding of the challenges faced by everyone (Freeman, 1997; Innes & Booher, 2010). The result is a true collaborative dialogue, in which information becomes crucial to the success of actions (Innes & Booher, 2010).

If a multiplicity of actors is so important for CG, it is no less so for TCA. This is because when Habermas (2012a) explains the way he understands linguistic understanding, he emphasizes that one of the conditions is that speakers and listeners understand the significance of a sentence to the extent that they know under what conditions this sentence is true.

To Habermas (2012a, p. 547), “the knowledge of true conditions consists in knowing how to determine whether the necessary conditions have been fulfilled in this situation or not.” Thus, the condition of a sentence’s truth determines its significance, and also demands the presence of speakers and listeners in order for linguistic understanding to take place. Therefore, communicative action demands interactions mediated by language in which all of the participants seek linguistic understanding, which logically demands a plurality of speakers and listeners for the construction of a dialogue.

Moreover, the multiplicity of actors is highlighted by Habermas in the TCA, when he clarifies that “the world only conquers objectivity in becoming valid as a single world for a community of subjects capable of acting and utilizing language” (Habermas, 2012a, p. 40), which the author denotes as the *community of interpreters*. In this manner, it is clear that in order for communicative practices to occur, it is necessary to have a set of assumed interpretations by the members to achieve the consensus desired by the communicative path (Habermas, 2012a). We add that within the context of the existence of a multiplicity of actors for the constitution of communicative action, there is Habermas’s reflection (2002, p. 96) on the communicative network which is constructed “is the way through which culture is formed and reproduced along with society and personality structures.”

In relation to this communicative network, Habermas (2012b, p. 269) explains that “from the internal perspective of the world of life, society is presented as a network of cooperation mediated through communication.” This occurs because society is mediated by a network of illocutionary acts, where the world of life is constructed by its members based on common cultural traditions that coexist with society. In this sense, the multiplicity of actors finds itself in a horizon of limitless possibilities of understanding, to the extent that the perspective of members around the world is the fruit of transparent understanding free from any form of violence (Habermas, 2012b).

4.2 Interdependence

Within the context of CG, interdependence is understood to be the idea that the solution to public problems depends on the involvement of public and private actors in a reciprocal relationship that is oriented towards the providing of public value. Therefore, interdependence is viewed from the perspective of public problems and not the unilateral perspective of specific actors, who do not have collaboration as the *sine qua non* of their existence (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bryson et al., 2015; Choi & Robertson, 2014a; Emerson et al., 2012; Robertson & Choi, 2012; Weber et al., 2007).

Therefore, CG should be constructed with flexibility, given that the government is not the only actor that has the obligation to provide public value or possesses decision making power (Bryson et al., 2014; Purdy, 2012).

This path of communication is interpreted by Habermas (2012a) as an intersubjective process of recognition, which requires understanding. The intersubjective recognition occurs when each individual perceives that what the other says has coherence given reality (propositional truth), reference elements (normative correction) and the possibility of being interpreted according to subjective criteria (subjective veracity). If, to Habermas (2012a), communicative action is oriented towards mutual understanding, this implies that there is an interdependence among the speech of interlocutors that they need to be able to recognize in terms of their pretensions of validity.

In interpreting the elements of collaborative rationality, Innes and Booher (2010) clarify that collaboration is not possible when the affected actors are not interdependent and, therefore, they do not have a motive to become involved with each other. On the contrary, when the valid and legitimate arguments that emanate from agents are understood, it is perceived that it is an interdependent relationship between the actors that the TCA demands. This is because these arguments are conceived of as a “reflexive continuation of acting that is oriented through other means of understanding” (Habermas, 2012a, p. 61). An individual cannot present a communicative act without interacting with another in a chain of speech and actions. These social actions, guided and inspired by the dialogue between individuals can only occur through the interdependence between the interpretation and the understanding of the actors, which occurs in three worlds: a) objective (material); b) social (regulated by norms); and c) subjective (interior). It is relevant to also consider that to Habermas (2002), the communicative act assumes a meaning that he calls *rigorously intersubjective*.

In view of the convergence of CG and TCA, one can say that interdependence in collaboration occurs when state actors offer true arguments in the policy formulation process which are, in turn, understood by citizens after an interaction full of speech and actions in the search for understanding.

4.3 Inclusive Deliberative Process

An inclusive deliberative process is intrinsic to CG and democratic principles and can be understood as much more than inviting everyone involved to take part in the process (Choi & Robertson, 2014a, 2014b; Elias & Alkadry, 2011; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Purdy, 2012). This is because deliberation should be inclusive to the extent that it recognizes the capacity of various opinions in influencing the process of constructing decisions (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Freeman, 1997; Johnston et al., 2010; Mah & Hills, 2014; Newman et al., 2004; Weber & Khademian, 2008). Therefore, “all citizens have vital information, especially in terms of their experiences in local governance processes” (Elias & Alkadry, 2011, p. 879).

Evidently, during this deliberation there should occur mutual understanding, in which an agreement of the parties should not be imposed: “it cannot be extorted by the adversary through manipulations” (Habermas, 2003, p. 165). Those involved, then, need to negotiate the situation and its expected consequences, internally harmonizing their plans of action. In CG, it is important that there is no imposition of interests, especially state interests (Ansell & Gash, 2008). This is because those involved should have the same degree of representation and importance and the State should not

impose or force matters so that its interests take precedence over the interests of others. If the contrary is true, this would be a disequilibrium of power which would not favor CG (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Thus, negotiation is a deliberative process that can only occur in a performing environment with argumentative practices, where there is inclusiveness in terms of the participation of all interested parties, equality of opportunity in speaking, veracity in terms of the convictions of the participants in what they say and an absence of coercion, where the winning argument is the one that is best founded on plausible reasons – force does not lead to the best argument. With this, Habermas (2014) defines with clarity the conditions of an inclusive deliberative process with equality of participation and free from coercion. As a consequence, here we do not consider the majority in relation to the minority by means of voting, but rather the consensus reached through acts of illocutionary speech, in seeking understanding among the participants.

Independent of how many participants and the velocity that deliberations occur, Elias and Alkadry (2011, p. 875) explain that deliberative processes can begin with some dispersed and apparently disconnected ideas, but these will lead to the flow of other ideas in “a process in which the internal logic can only be understood based on the process, the eyes and the words of those who participate.”

A process is collaboratively rational to Innes and Booher (2010, p. 6), “to the extent to which all the interested parties affected are involved with each other in face to face dialogue, bringing their various perspectives to the table to deliberate on the problems that face them jointly.” Instead of a perfect solution, the various actors involved offer a great variety of experience, knowledge and ideas with many options to explore (Innes & Booher, 2010). Dialogue and mutual comprehension in the deliberative process reinforce the confidence and motivation of those involved in the practices and spaces of CC (Choi & Robertson, 2014b), and speech free from coercion directs the participants to seek this understanding (Habermas, 2014).

4.4 Search for Consensus

When we speak of consensus within the context of CG, Buuren (2009) explains that its construction process signifies that actors arrive at a shared understanding in the identification of a problem and determining its best solution. The need for this understanding is also noted by Habermas (2002). The consensus in TCA deals with a rationally motivated understanding. It signifies that the consensus is the fruit of understanding, that only occurs through communicative action – and this, in turn, demands the use of language and other conditions to exist, such as: the cooperative construction of plans of action among participants; common interpretations of situations; and shared understanding (Habermas, 2002). Thus, this consensus occurs exactly when the listener accepts the interlocutor’s speech, establishing a common accord – this will be, therefore, the “foundation of a consensual coordination of a plan of action desired by each individual” (Habermas, 2012a, p. 512).

In other words, consensus to Habermas (2012a), is the intersubjective recognition of the pretension of validity that the speaker unites with an exteriorization. Pretensions of validity are directly linked with the conditions of truth of a statement. It is so much so that Habermas (2012a, p. 481) explains that “speakers and listeners understand the significance of a sentence when they know under what conditions the sentence is true.” For TCA as for CG, consensus is a condition for understanding. On the other hand, Innes and Booher (2010) emphasize that as much as a complete consensus cannot be achieved, there has

to be substantial agreement among the absolute majority and all efforts must be made to find creative forms to satisfy all of the participants before closing the dialogue. Various opinions, in this manner, even though they are inevitable, can be harmonized to the extent that they occur, through a dialogue process which is free from coercion as argued by the TCA, based on the conviction that certain decisions are more advantageous for the network as a whole (Robertson & Choi, 2012).

As a consequence, for the TCA “it is the actors themselves who procure consensus and measure truth, corrections and veracity” (Habermas, 2012a, p. 192). For this to take place, the inclusive deliberative process, with its characteristics of broad participation and influence in decisions, is revealed to be the best path in the search for consensus (Robertson & Choi, 2012).

Having realized some theoretical convergences of CG and TCA, the next section will present an analytical approach to research based on these interfaces.

5. ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF COMMUNICATIVE COLLABORATION

A system of governance requires a democratic regime where there is the participation of society in the elaboration of public policy (Arturi, 2003). According to Habermas (2012a, pp. 155-156), “people who live in a society need to situate themselves within it to achieve what they want and to avoid what they do not want.” In this same sense, Faguet (2014) emphasizes that, while in developed countries the participation of individuals in the formation of organizations is getting greater and greater, in developing countries the opposite occurs: access is limited to given groups in the composition of organized civil society. It is indispensable to rethink this form of social participation more specifically, identifying convergencies between CG and TCA, which assume a multiplicity of actors, interdependence, an inclusive deliberative process and the search for consensus.

In noting the convergence of CG and TCA in searching for theoretical constructs emphasized by both theories, we perceive that they possess a basic Habermasian assumption in common: “practical issues can be decided in an essentially argumentative manner” (Habermas, 2012a, p. 51). It is clear that a process, being denoted as collaborative, needs to provide conditions which lead to a conclusion where understanding is privileged. Without this, we cannot speak of CC. This is because there is a backdrop that permeates the four theoretical elements in common: communication through dialogue. Innes and Booher (2010, p. 100) emphasize that “authentic dialogue requires basic rules adopted collaboratively which will permit productive dialogue.” Thus, “without sincerity and without questioning given knowledge and assumptions, a dialogue cannot be collaboratively rational” (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 100). As may be perceived, these issues are close to those discussed by TCA in terms of the validity of the acts of speech.

It is important to point out that Habermas (2012b, p. 221) conceives of communicative action as “a process of cooperative interpretation in which the participants refer simultaneously to something in the subjective, social and objective world.” It may be perceived that this action is present in the spaces and practices of CC. Habermas (2002, p. 69) intentionally returned to this subject in his other works, affirming that acts of speech oriented towards understanding “cannot be realized without the cooperation and free assent of listeners and can only be explained through the resources of the idea of understanding which lives inside the linguistic medium.” Therefore, “illocutionary ends cannot be achieved by a route other than cooperation” (Habermas, 2002, p. 68).

Habermas (2002) argues that one does not obtain cooperation in an individual manner. There needs to be a linguistic understanding as argued by the author, in the search for a consensus of practical solutions. However, this cooperation does not occur simply due to there being a multiplicity of actors. This is needed as well as a *community of interpreters*, the need for interdependence in terms of linguistic interpretation and understanding, inclusiveness of participation without coercion through the medium of shared understanding – elements pointed out by Ansell and Gash (2008), Innes and Booher (2010), Robertson and Choi (2012) and Choi and Robertson (2014a) for the construction of CG.

It can be stated that, for CG in its convergence with TCA, it is not enough for the public administration to provide information to all involved through participation channels and/or present the accounting of its activities. Society needs to participate in an inclusive deliberative process, with equality of participation and the absence of coercion, where consensus is the result of a shared understanding of a given situation.

With this interaction among interested parties and decision makers, governance structures become more permeable to social needs and a mutual assistance process occurs in relation to common or partially different objectives. On the other hand, one cannot ignore the presence of conflicts in this process. These will exist and the tonic of the process will be seeking solutions to problems that will be difficult for a single actor to achieve (Brown et al., 2012). In this way, CG and TCA design a form of dialogue that seeks consensus in a real plan where there are divergencies and conflicts.

Dealing further with possible conflicts in collaboration, Emerson et al. (2012) underline the importance of mutual understanding at this moment referring specifically to the capacity to understand and respect the positions and interests of others, despite the existence of discord. In relation to this, Robertson and Choi (2012) state that dialogue, present in the inclusive deliberative process, does not necessarily have to have a low index of conflict, given that this stimulates the deliberative process and increases the satisfaction of participants to the extent that there are concessions made by the interested parties (Robertson & Choi, 2012).

Based on the idea that in an inclusive deliberative process conflict is inevitable, Elias and Alkadry (2011) offer the concept of constructive conflict – which is based on the integration of differences, where people recognize that these differences and similarities within a group can create a much richer understanding of problems and solutions, which would not occur in isolated or individual actions. In this sense, Habermas (1997) does not eliminate conflict in human relations, but argues that it is possible to overcome it through communicative action, establishing bases for a society that is democratically emancipated.

The presence of conflicts, therefore, demands more and more that participants use well-founded arguments that can be criticized, where a common accord will be supported by reason. And this reason should always be communicative, given that a conflict of opinions should never be resolved by the strategic use of violence (Habermas, 2012a). If this occurs, we are dealing with neither a communicative action nor a CC practice.

It should be noted, therefore, that this is the first time that this theoretical convergence between CG and TCA has been identified with the intent of directing studies that desire to identify the spaces and practices of CC. Box 1 presents the categories of analysis, their significance, and questions which can guide empirical studies.

BOX 1 ANALYTICAL APPROACH FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNICATIVE COLLABORATION PRACTICES

Analytical Approach				
Categories	Multiplicity of Actors	Interdependence	Inclusive Deliberative Process	Search for Consensus
Conceptual synthesis	Linguistic understanding requires a plurality of speakers and listeners to legitimize the collaborative process.	Interdependence occurs when the arguments of state actors and citizens are understood after an interaction of speech and actions in the search for understanding.	In the presence of inclusive participation without coercion, the State and society make deliberative spaces viable.	Understanding requires assumptions regarding truth, corrections and veracity, so that even if there are conflicts, a consensus can be formed.
Central questions	Who are the actors involved? Where do they come from? Is there the representation of various organizations? Have all of those who may be affected by the decision participated in the debate?	Do the actors understand what is being said? What are the objectives in common and what are the differences? Do the authors coordinate their actions in a joint fashion? How do the actors cooperate? Do these interactions persist or are they temporary?	Have all the actors been heard from? Which opinions have influenced the decision taken? Which arguments have been discarded and why? Have asymmetrical power relationships been observed?	Are the arguments used true and sincere? Are the actors willing to adjust their preferences? Have the actors reached an accord? Are the decisions considered legitimate by all of the participants?

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

It should be emphasized that the analytical purpose of this study is not to identify the ideal type of governance or the model arrangement between the State and society. The learning process and the respect for the specificities of each public space are assumptions of collaboration, and their complexities discourage any search for an ideal model of governance. On the other hand, what is offered is a point of departure for reflecting on the possibility of identifying spaces propitious for CC practices.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Traditional structures for decision making without the participation of those involved or their manipulation has served to increase conflicts, social dissatisfaction and lawsuits (Innes & Booher, 2010). The efforts of managerialism have ratified the role of the centralizing and traditional State and proposals for public governance have kept the focus on the accounting of the activities developed by the State, without constructing processes for collective decision making. In sum, they have reproduced a logic based on instrumental rationality to the exclusion of citizens and the centralization of decision making within the State.

This study proposes the construction of an analytical approach based on convergences between CG and TCA for the investigation of CC practices between the State and society. This effort has resulted in the identification of assumptions of a CC based on interaction through dialogue among multiple actors, through deliberations mediated by rational arguments in the search for a consensus.

The findings of the state of the art of CG and classic Habermasian works demonstrate that the assumptions of CC make environments propitious to inclusive social participation without coercion viable. Thus, society and state actors can perceive that they share common goals and that their differing opinions on possible situations can initiate a process of mutual social learning. Without ignoring conflicts, overcoming them is possible through the dialogue proposed by CG and the TCA, in which the use of communication is the substitute for violence, coercion and centralization. With this, the search for a solution for public problems is no longer a one directional proposal of the State, but rather it is the fruit of a deliberate consensus with other social actors, where there is a common understanding of what the problem is and the best paths to its solution.

The questions oriented by the analytical approach could be a point of departure for researchers who, after choosing which reality to study, can direct their efforts to the identification of CC practices between the State and society. Collaborative processes are a challenge in countries without a tradition of social participation in public decisions. On the other hand, they are facilitators of change when they are faced with complex public problems that require multiple efforts (Bryson et al., 2015). Moreover, collaboration helps make institutions more effective and adaptive and makes the system itself more resilient and more permeable to social needs (Innes & Booher, 2010).

Another important issue is that CG is interwoven with other issues present in TCA studies. Bingham (2010), as well as Emerson et al. (2012), understand that CG extends beyond some subjects, but do not delve deeper into issues such as: the relationship between the policy process and civic engagement, deliberative democracy, and collaborative public management and conflict resolution, among other subjects which form an agenda for future theoretical-empirical studies. Studies of the convergencies between the Habermasian proposal of deliberative democracy and CG may constitute the object of future studies of the understanding of the elements that are fundamental to social participation and public deliberation. They can try to respond to the following question:

- How can CC be established through arrangements between the State, the market and civil society?

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